GERALDINE;

OR,

Modes of Faith and Practice.

A TALE,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY A LADY.

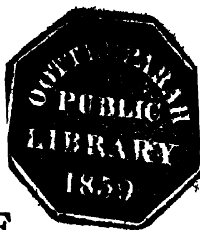
There is no virtue more amiable in the softer sex, than that mild and quiescent spirit of Devotion, which, without entangling itself in the dogmas of Religion, is melted by its charities and exhilarated by its hopes. COWPER.

To be good and disagreeable, is high treason against virtue.
ELIZABETH SMITH.

VOL. III.

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GERALDINE.

CHAPTER I.

Montague possessed none of that decision and inflexibility, half devilish, half sublime,—the boast of the fallen archangel. He could not glory in a mind not to be changed by time or place; on the contrary, the effect of time and place upon his mind was irresistible. In the retirement of Woodlands, aloof from the companions and temptations by which he had been surrounded; he had leisure to reflect upon and lament the past. He could not resist the influence of shady groves and blooming bowers, where every object, and every sound, combined to rekindle

tender feelings, and awaken soft regrets. He could have said with the poet, —

> There is no eddy on the stream,
> No bough that light winds bend and toss,
> No chequering of the sunny beam,
> Upon the woodland moss —
> No star in evening sky, no flower
> Whose beauty od'rous breezes stir,
> No sweet bird, singing in the bower,
> Nay, not the rustling of a leaf,
> That does not nurse and feed my grief,
> By wakening thoughts of her.

He dwelt upon the beauty and engaging qualities of Geraldine, till they appeared more attractive than ever; and imagination, combining with the natural contrariety of the human heart, quickly transformed him from a careless suitor, into the most ardent of despairing lovers.

In this frame of mind, he received Mrs. Mowbray's letter, and returned the following answer: —

"*To Mrs. Mowbray.*"

"I am not ungrateful for your exertions, my dear mother; but the present

miserable state of my mind prevents me from appreciating them, as I should do, in a quieter moment.

"I have lost Geraldine; and when, in the calmness of solitude, I review my past conduct, it appears insulting—inexcusable. I execrate my folly—in the bitterness of my heart, I could curse the coquettes and syrens by whom I was for a moment lured. The illusion has vanished—like the mortal in fairy land, whose eyes were touched by the fatal drug; instead of beauty, and grace, and ravishing sights, and sounds, I now discover only meanness and deformity. And for such worthless beings, I have cast away a 'pearl richer than all their tribe!'

"Geraldine has dissolved our engagement, but she cannot dissolve the spell by which my heart is bound to hers. I feel all its power: it was formed by her own loveliness and virtues, and must endure for ever. She was all beauty and truth; but I deserve to lose her. I have trifled with the tenderness of a devoted heart, and it is no

longer mine. I have wantonly destroyed the fair temple of felicity, which rose in beautiful proportion before me; and I can now only lament over the ruin I have made. I shall be glad to leave England; but, alas! new scenes will not 'steep my senses in forgetfulness.' All that is lovely, in nature and art, will excite painful sensations, by reminding me of the treasure I have lost. I enclose a letter for Geraldine; she is too gentle not to pity the feelings by which I am harassed; and even the meed of her sympathy will now be precious to me.

"Adieu, my dear mother; I cannot enter upon less interesting topics; but I am, more than ever,

"Your grateful and affectionate

"MONTAGUE."

Mrs. Mowbray smiled at the desponding tone, and energetic self-reproaches of this letter; but still more at the self-delusion by which Montague persuaded himself that

his present feelings would endure *for ever*. She declared that the *for ever* of a lover of Montague's temperament, resembled the *for ever* of the Hebrews; it must be taken in a limited acceptation.

But though his eloquence might be coolly criticised at the age of fifty; she believed, that it would be resistless with a girl of eighteen, and she calculated upon the happiest effect from the letter addressed to Geraldine. It was as follows: —

" *To Miss Beresford.*

" Perhaps, Geraldine, you may deem it presumptuous in a rejected man to obtrude upon you the history of his feelings; but I am too wretched to be silent; and who can understand them like yourself? The union of thought and sentiment which subsisted between us cannot, like our engagement, be severed in a moment. The bond may be partly broken, but a thousand interwoven links will still remain, over which, time itself will have but little power. I have no

no claim on your forbearance, nor have I either the right, or the inclination to upbraid you. The weak victim of vanity—of momentary impulse, is, indeed, unworthy the attachment of a pure and faithful heart: and, yet I am still capable of appreciating the incalculable worth of that heart. I have forfeited my claim to the possession of excellence; but my sense of its infinite value remains undiminished. How brilliant and beautiful did the path of life appear, as traced by the finger of Love!—those delicious hours of mutual confidence, so rich in enjoyment, and so bright with hope, are then gone for ever.

"Can you forget the fair picture which the future presented? the home of love and joy which we delighted to sketch?

"Alas! all is now reversed: to me, the future appears wrapt in impenetrable gloom. I have exchanged a paradise of sweets for a desart in which all is barren; but my own madness and folly have wrought the sad change.

"You will pity these feelings, though you cannot share them; for respecting your ultimate happiness I can have no fears.

"That decision of character, which has enabled you to stifle the pleadings of tenderness, and listen only to those of judgment, will preserve you from any acute suffering. The storm, which tears up my happiness by the roots, will pass kindly as a gentle gale over you; and the slight agitation it produces will be soon forgotten. You will continue to pursue in peace and purity the even tenor of your way. Nor can I wish it otherwise; the guilt of having wrecked your happiness, as well as my own, would have been insupportable.

"May Heaven's choicest blessings be multiplied around you; may your destiny, though no longer interwoven with mine, be bright as an angel's dream!

"I shall soon be far from you in a land of strangers; but, in whatever region I may be, the lively interest I take in your happiness, can cease only when the grave closes

in upon me; and when that moment arrives you will without effort, pity and forgive the errors of

"Your devoted and affectionate

"MONTAGUE."

Geraldine read this letter with as much emotion as Mrs. Mowbray could desire. Montague, negligent and indifferent, had not been dismissed without many a pang; but Montague, repentant and desponding, acknowledging his errors, pourtraying his grief, and urging his love, was irresistible. Upon the impulse of the moment, a letter of recal, and forgiveness, was written; but before it was sealed, Geraldine remembered that she had lately made a voluntary promise to take no important step, without previously consulting Mr. Fullarton. Hoping and believing, that he would think it right to restore Montague to the privileges he had forfeited, she hastened to put into his hand the letter she had just received,

with its answer, and to appeal to his judgment.

She eagerly watched his countenance as he perused them, and felt astonished, and somewhat indignant at the smile which occasionally stole over his features. A silence of some minutes succeeded his perusal of these letters, which Geraldine, with a mixture of impatience and timidity, interrupted by saying,—

" I fear, Sir, that you do not approve my decision; may I beg the favour of your counsel?"

" It seems cruel, my dear Geraldine, to check the hopes which now fill your heart; nor would any thing less than the interest I feel in your happiness, induce me to question the prudence of the full and free forgiveness accorded in this letter to Montague." Geraldine turned pale.

" Do you then doubt the reality of the feelings he expresses?" said she.

" Far from it," returned Mr. Fullarton, " I have not the smallest doubt, that Mon-

tague, at this moment is suffering keenly; that at this moment he loves you with the utmost fervour and fondness; and that his lot, as separated from yours, appears extremely wretched."

"And if happiness be indeed within my gift," said Geraldine, "will it be kind—will it be generous to withhold it?"

"Let me hope," replied Mr. Fullarton, "that you will unite a little of my wisdom and prudence, to your own kindness and generosity. I know you will think me harsh and rigid; but Montague's recent conduct has weakened all reasonable ground of confidence. Time alone can restore it, and to the test of time he ought to submit."

Geraldine continued silent, her fond and tender feelings struggling against the conviction of her understanding.

"I am not surprised at your hesitation," said Mr. Fullarton: "Montague is extremely engaging; his fine talents and taste, the ardour and generosity of his

feelings, combine to render him peculiarly attractive; but he is infirm of purpose, and deficient in what ought to be considered the ground-work of all real excellence,—religious principle."

Geraldine could only weep.

"A character, however fascinating, if destitute of religious principle, resembles the house built upon the sand. We may admire the beauty of the edifice, its fair proportions, and tasteful decorations; but it will not stand the shock of the foaming flood, or sweeping blast." Geraldine ventured to say that Montague was not *destitute* of religious principle.

"You must distinguish between religious *feeling*, and religious *principle*," said Mr. Fullarton, "Montague does not act under the influence of the one, though he may occasionally experience the other. His feelings are his sole guide, and they vary with varying circumstances."

"You would have me renounce him for

ever then," said Geraldine in a tone of uncontrollable anguish.

"No," said Mr. Fullarton, "not for ever; Montague may become all that we desire him to be; but, before your engagement is definitively renewed, it will be wise to ascertain the effect of absence and novelty on a character such as his. I would have you prove, by the consistency of your conduct, that you were not influenced by the littleness of female vanity; that you did not give him up in a moment of pique excited by the temporary loss of his attentions, but upon the conviction that pure and steady principles are the only foundations for security or happiness in married life. I do not wonder that his letter should awaken your tenderness; but what does it prove?"

"It proves, at least, that he loves me," said Geraldine impatiently.

"The decision, my dear Miss Beresford, rests with yourself," observed Mr. Fullarton, gravely; "you requested my counsel

but I shall feel rather grieved, than offended at your declining to adopt it." He rose to go; but Geraldine, ashamed of her petulance, intreated him not to leave her in displeasure.

"Do not imagine, my love," said he, taking her hand, "that I witness this struggle of your feelings with indifference. I am not one of those who estimate such trials lightly; but will it not be right, will it not be kind, to use your influence over Montague to the best purpose? If you are a Christian indeed, and in truth, can you promise yourself happiness, in an intimate union with one who can be no sharer in your purest joys, your brightest hopes, your richest treasure? Genius and taste are delightful qualifications; but there are deficiencies which render even the 'fine gold dim.' Nothing less than the power of Christian principle can regulate the impetuosity of Montague's feelings, or restrain that of his passions: without this unerring guide, his life will pass in sinning and re-

penting; he will be alternately the slave of passion, and the victim of remorse. For his sake, then, if not for your own, let your acceptance be conditional; explain to him your feelings, hopes, and views. If your heart be really affected with the awful reality, and glorious privileges of Christianity, you will be eloquent upon such a theme."

Geraldine, who had continued silent, oppressed with contending emotions, now exclaimed in a tone of unfeigned humility, "Is it for me to assume the office of teacher? more need have I to take the humble attitude of a disciple: I, who so soon forgot the instructions and example of a saint."

"Take courage, Geraldine," replied Mr. Fullarton; "the good seed may still bring forth a hundred-fold, remember, however, that a single act of self-control is of more value than a thousand self-reproaches."

He took his leave and Geraldine, con-

vinced of the wisdom of his counsel, after a painful struggle with her own tender feelings and wishes, reluctantly adopted it. The letter now dictated to Montague was eloquent and impressive, it dwelt upon the past, present, and future. She refused to renew her engagement, till he had submitted to some months' probation, but amidst the apparent firmness of this decision, so much of woman's tenderness was betrayed, so fond a hope of their ultimate re-union expressed, so warm a wish was breathed for his happiness, that Montague, equally touched and gratified, felt his hopes revive; and full of confidence in himself, and gratitude to Geraldine, wrote a letter expressive of the most passionate tenderness, and anticipating their re-union as a delightful certainty. The preparations for his voyage were soon completed, and the day, the moment for a parting interview arrived. His strong, unrepressed emotion, the tenderness of every look and

word, would have made their way to hearts 'of sterner stuff,' than Geraldine's.

For some days after their separation his inconstancy was forgotten; all was dismissed from her recollection, but his lingering look of fondness, and the last fervent grasp of his hand.

As the vividness of this impression faded, thoughts less consolatory would obtrude: a sudden pang sometimes seized her heart, as she recollected the past; and if, it occasionally beat high with hope, it more frequently throbbed with apprehension: but Geraldine had other hopes to cherish and other fears to combat, besides those inspired by love. Life, whether passed amid sunshine or storm, now appeared a gift of inestimable value, too precious to be wasted in the indulgence of idle regrets or vain fears. During the two or three past years she had contemplated objects through a false medium, she had lived in an enchanted region, thronged with fai-

and glittering shadows, but the spell was broken, she perceived that

All was delusion, nought was truth.

A present and future scene in all its important reality, gradually expanded before her eyes, and the beam of everlasting truth played over it.

CHAP. II.

In pursuing her scheme of reformation, Geraldine found much to combat in her own heart, and something to endure from the opinions and habits of those around her.

An occasion soon offered for putting the stability of her recent resolutions to the test. Cards of invitation to a splendid Sunday-evening party, had been accepted. The day arrived, and some allusion to the engagement for the evening being made, during breakfast, Geraldine with a slight blush, begged to be excused attending it.

"Are you ill, my dear," said Mrs. Mowbray, in a tone of surprise; "or only whimsical?"

"Neither the one nor the other," re-

turned Geraldine, "I simply wish to remain at home."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Mowbray; "we have been engaged this month; the Duchess will break her heart if you are not there."

"The hearts of fine ladies are not so easily endangered," said Geraldine: "they are not made of quite such brittle materials."

"I don't mean," returned Mrs. Mowbray, "either to say, or insinuate, that she really cares about you. I dare say, if you were to take a flight to the planet Jupiter, or Saturn, it would not disturb her the least in the world; but this will be her last and most brilliant concert, and she depends upon you for that exquisite ballad, which you sing so like a syren, that all the men love, and all the women envy you."

"As I am not at all anxious to produce such an effect," returned Geraldine, "I must persevere in my intention of remaining at home."

"Nonsense, my love," said Mrs. Mowbray; "I shall not allow any such thing; I shall not stir without my little nightingale."

"No," said Geraldine, in a firmer tone; "you must excuse me; I cannot go this evening."

"*Cannot*," said Mrs. Mowbray, in an accent of some displeasure, "is not the term you ought to use; a more decided one would express your meaning better."

Geraldine remained silent.—"If it be not too sacred a mystery," continued Mrs. Mowbray, "will you have the goodness to explain the reason of this sudden preference of solitude?"

Geraldine hesitated a few moments, and then summoned courage to say, "I confess, I think it wrong to join such parties on a Sunday; therefore, in future, I mean to decline them."

Mr. Mowbray looked up from the newspaper he was reading, and fixed his eyes on her face with a sarcastic smile. Fanny

laughed, and Mrs. Mowbray immediately exclaimed, "Wrong! Pray, my love, how long have you been favoured with this ray of the new light?"

"It is not very new," replied Geraldine, rallying her spirits; "it is, at least, as old the creation."

"Oh! I can explain it all," said Fanny, with a look of sudden recollection. "She has received a lecture upon the subject, from the very grave and reverend Mr. Fullarton. I happened to invite him to the gala you gave this day fortnight. I only wish you could have seen his face."

"How could you think of such a thing?" said Mrs. Mowbray, laughing; "you might as well have asked Sir Isaac Newton to waltz with you, if he had been alive."

"To say the truth," replied Fanny, "I had some curiosity to witness the effect the proposal would have upon his countenance. It had just the sort of expression you may imagine *Christian's* to have had, as he passed through '*Vanity Fair*;' and

he absolutely insinuated, that all the inhabitants of the continent, English visitors included, were on their way to the regions of Pluto."

"Who can help admiring such enlightened charity!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "no wonder it produced an instantaneous effect upon Geraldine."

"So you really mean, my dear, to stay at home for the express purpose of counting your beads," said Fanny, looking at her stedfastly. "Montague should be here, to say, 'Nymph, in your orisons, be all my sins remembered.'"

"You intend, perhaps, to revive the fashion of exchanging love for devotion," said Mrs. Mowbray: "that was quite a regular affair in the old French school; but you are too young, a vast deal too young, for this business; forty summers hence, you will have time enough for all the Ave Marias and Paternosters that may be necessary to propitiate St. Peter."

"Would you advise me, then," said Ge-

raldine, "to persevere in the interim, in doing what I feel, what I know, to be wrong?"

"I think," continued Mrs. Mowbray, without answering her question, "that people who set up for reformists, must have a very comfortable opinion of the superiority of their own judgment. They do not at all hesitate to say, that those who differ from them in practice, are in the high road to perdition."

"Yes, the conceit of *religionists*, amidst all their professions of humility, is really amazing," observed Mr. Mowbray; "these insects, inhabitants of a world, which, if it were blotted this moment from the creation, would cause no more sensation than 'the fall of one single leaf in a vast forest,' can absolutely talk of glorifying and dishonouring God, by such and such actions. They can entertain the preposterous notion that the Creator of 'ten thousand times ten thousand worlds,' is affected by their little, paltry, ridiculous movements; by the

endles changes of their absurd and frivolous opinions."

Geraldine listened in silence to this sophistry: to argue with Mr. Mowbray, would have been as fruitless a task, as that to which Sisyphus was doomed in the infernal regions. She therefore contented herself with reflecting upon those gracious and precious assurances of individual protection scattered throughout the Scriptures. She remembered, that He, who is there described as sitting 'on the circle of the the Heavens — as riding the whirlwind and directing the storm, is also represented as clothing the lily of the field, and noting the fall of a sparrow; that all are parts of one stupendous whole; that a Being of infinite intelligence, can comprehend, at one glance, all that is vast in immensity, and all that is minute in detail: and that the ear of infinite mercy is open, not only to the rapturous hymn of the Seraph, but to the feeble plaint of suffering humanity. She was not surprised at Mr. Mowbray's view

of the subject; with him, Reason was every thing, Revelation nothing; but he forgot that 'Reason is the *eye*, not the *light*.'

"I believe," said Mrs. Mowbray, mistaking the thoughtful expression of Geraldine's countenance, "that you already repent your solitary scheme; but though the oracle has spoken, there is no positive necessity for abiding by its decrees."

"I should expect no responses in future," said Geraldine, "if I treated them with contempt; and I am persuaded, that it is my interest and duty to obey them."

To avoid farther importunity, she rose to leave the room; and as she caught the sound of Mrs. Mowbray's satirical laugh, she felt the truth of the observation, '*C'est le premier pas qui coute.*'

CHAP. III.

The return of the family to Woodlands was in Geraldine's favour; for, though the house was usually thronged with visitors, there was less positive dissipation than in London. Still she found her courage and perseverance often put to the test. In a circle as gay and thoughtless as that in which she moved, the performance, even of the most common religious duties, was the subject of surprise and raillery. Her attendance at church twice on a Sunday was deemed intolerable affectation of sanctity; and her refusal to join in gay diversions on that day, was either laughed at as an absurdity, or combated as a prejudice. It required no small degree of civil courage to endure patiently the sly sarcasm, the

gay jest, the contemptuous sneer, by which she was alternately assailed. It was a sort of light artillery perpetually annoying her path, though not sufficiently formidable to arrest her progress; and the species of warfare in which she was thus compelled to engage, was peculiarly trying to a temper naturally gentle and yielding.

Mr. Fullarton did not desert his charge in the hour of trial. To shield her in some degree from the petty persecution to which she was exposed, he proposed that her Sundays should be passed with him at the vicarage; and though Mrs. Mowbray laughed, and prophesied that it would produce the same effect as the cave of Trophonius, she could not formally oppose the scheme.

No arrangement could have been more consonant with the wishes, nor more conducive to the religious improvement of Geraldine; and she soon learned to look forward to these weekly visits, as a child to a happy holiday.

Mr. Fullarton and Mr. Maitland divided between them the labours of the day at church; and their style of preaching, at once clear, sound, and faithful, addressed itself equally to the understanding, the conscience, and heart of the hearer. The Christian religion, as they defined it, appeared in all its fair and beautiful proportions; its peculiar doctrines were earnestly insisted upon; nor were its distinguishing duties forgotten. Faith was the root, and trunk, and stem of the tree; but holy practice and pure morality the foliage, and fruit, that evinced its health and vigour.

Mr. Fullarton's domestic establishment was superintended by a widow lady, in the decline of life, who had experienced enough of its reverses, to make a home at the vicarage an acceptable asylum.

Mrs. Herbert's delicate health had confined her intercourse with the neighbouring families, to occasional morning calls; so that Geraldine knew little more of her

character than might be guessed from very gentle manners, and a prepossessing countenance. It was reserved for more intimate intercourse, to unfold the mingled sweetness and energy of that mind which displayed the full beauty of piety. She had survived husband, children, and friends; exchanged wealth for dependence, and health for infirmity; yet the past seemed to *furnish her only with motives for submission*; the present, *only with a theme for gratitude*.

A beautiful writer of the present day has called the life of Sir Philip Sydney 'poetry put into action;' the life of Mrs. Herbert might be termed 'religion put into action.' She neither lectured nor reproved, nor did she declaim against the idle follies of the world; but Geraldine could not contemplate her serene and cheerful manner, her active benevolence, her ready sympathy with the feelings of the young and the complaints of the old, her superiority to selfish gratifications, her submission to

positive evils, without feeling the full value of those principles which were at once her refuge and her guide; the 'cloud,' to shelter her from the noon-day heat, the 'pillar of fire,' guiding her to the 'promised land.'

Mr. Fullarton perceived with delight that every day passed at the vicarage strengthened the convictions of Geraldine; but he knew that the religion which depends upon time, place, and circumstance, is of little value; and that the fervor of newly awakened feeling might melt away as frost-work in the morning beam. He was therefore anxious to enlist her understanding, as well as her affections, in the cause of Christianity; and in the course of reading he recommended, which was at once argumentative and experimental, her attention was directed alternately to the historical evidences of her religion, to its sublime morality, and beautiful adaptation, to the wants of frail and fallen man.

Geraldine appeared to live in a new

world, in a purer and more ethereal region, whence petty anxieties and sordid and selfish cares were banished. There was no room for them in hearts full of love to God, and good will to man.

The peaceful days thus passed were often closed by an evening stroll, prolonged during the still and delicious hour of summer twilight. She remembered her long rambles with Montague at the same hour; and her thoughts naturally travelled to the distant land he was now traversing.

Mr. Maitland, who was usually of the party, seemed to understand her musings, and their intercourse gradually became interesting and confidential; he had many claims upon her confidence besides those arising from the quiet excellence of his own character; he was Montague's friend, counsellor, and advocate, and often spoke with great interest, and in an encouraging tone, of the promising points of his character.

To this language Geraldine loved to

listen; for it harmonised with her own hopes and wishes: but as Mr. Maitland watched the revival and developement of religious principle in her mind, he became increasingly anxious that Montague should indeed be worthy of her. He saw the unaffected humility of a Christian gradually blending with the graces and attractive loveliness of the woman; and he began to think of her as of a prize, precious as it was matchless.

CHAP. IV.

GERALDINE, under the existing circumstances had declined engaging in a correspondence with Montague, but she had been secretly longing for tidings of him, when a packet arrived, containing, among other letters, the following one addressed to Mr. Maitland.

" *To the Rev. Charles Maitland.*

" Oh, for some fairy messenger, some light Ariel, to do love's bidding; that you might send me with the speed of thought, news of my own sweet Geraldine; I would give half I shall ever be worth, to borrow a magic glass, in which I might gaze at her for a moment, as Surry did on her lovely namesake: but, alas! no friendly

wizard appears; I am at the mercy of the winds and waves, which care as little for the murmurs of a lover, as for the threats of a monarch.

"I think I can hear you exclaim against the inconsistency of human nature in general, and of mine in particular: do so as long as you choose, and I will echo word for word. I will acknowledge all you please, if you will believe, and teach Geraldine to believe, that she is dearer to me than ever.

"At parting all the train of possibilities which might prevent our meeting again, weighed so heavily upon my heart, that even the prospect of visiting 'Fair Greece,' that 'land of lost Gods and godlike men,' could no longer inspire me. I would gladly have exchanged the sight and sound of dashing waves for the dullest cabin in Hampshire; nor did my regret and reluctance vanish for many a weary day.

"I believe the sight of 'Calypso's Isles,' first rekindled my enthusiasm. It is well, you will say, that no fair goddess is to be

found there now to lure me with her smiles and witchery; but the hour of danger is passed. I should look with an eye of indifference on the peerless goddess, and her lovely train: their thrilling glances would be harmless; there would be no necessity for my escaping, as Telemachus did, by a desperate leap.

"I spare you the detail of my voyage, nor will I say a word about sparkling waves and soft moon-beams. It costs me something to sacrifice my magnificent descriptions; but what care you for the 'rosy fingers of Aurora,' or Dian's chaste and silver light. Every little point and island that we approached were full of interest. I think, even you, man of marble as you are, who know nothing of love but the name, could not have passed Leucadia without emotion. To a lover, it was haunted, holy ground; the shade of Sappho seemed still to linger there, and the tones of her immortal lyre to float deliciously on the evening breeze. Perhaps the

barren Ithaca, which forms part of the view, would have been to you equally attractive; and whilst I communed with the spirit of the brilliant Sappho, you would have invoked the shade of Penelope, or calmly turned your eyes towards the spot where the cottage of Eumæus and the tomb of the faithful dog once stood.

"My impatience to descry the shores of Greece increased as we drew near them. I had resolved that the first spot I examined should be the 'primal city of the land;' and I cannot define the emotions which filled my heart, as I approached it. I forgot the lapse of ages and the revolutions of empires; and felt as if I were about to hold converse with the mighty spirits who once dwelt there.

"The first aspect of a foreign country usually excites in the mind of its visitant, a feeling of eager and lively curiosity. The eye is arrested by new sights, the ear by strange sounds; the mind itself is rather distracted than exercised; but here we are

conscious of a higher and more solemn feeling. We look with indifference upon those around us; they seem to be intruders upon the hallowed scene; our business is with a mightier and more illustrious race.

"I was entering the Piræus; my eyes fixed on the tomb of Themistocles; and what cared I for men of these degenerate days.

"It is impossible to view the solitude of the Piræus without emotion: where, according to Pliny, a thousand vessels once floated, not a single one is now to be seen; all is loneliness and desolation. The temple of Venus, the superb arsenals have disappeared; nothing but rocks and ruins meet the eye; and yet this loneliness and desertion pleased me better than cheerful voices and busy sounds would have done; they seemed to harmonise with the ruined and fallen state of the city I was about to visit.

"The sound of the waves dashing against the tomb of Themistocles, is all that inter-

rupts the deep silence. I mused, and moralised as gravely as you could have done, as I passed the road leading from the Piræus, to this august and celebrated city, once the haunt of gods and heroes. Dull and cold must that heart be, which can approach it without pity and veneration; its glory has passed away; its sun for ever set; but a strange and melancholy lustre still beams over the fallen temple and broken column; and the enchained captive, sitting in sackcloth, and ashes, is a more dear and sacred object, than when, in the day of her pomp and power, she appeared as queen and mistress among the nations.

"Genius has wept amidst the ruins of Greece, in these her days of darkness. An immortal bard has once more tuned his his harp in the land of the muses, and its echoes have awakened the sympathy of a thousand hearts!

"You would not thank me for a minute detail of the ruins of Athens, even if I were in a humour to give it to you; they have

been so amply described, that you know all which a mere description can teach.

"The beautiful colour of these ruins, astonishes the eye accustomed to the dingy hue of our edifices, but the tint of time in this brilliant climate, is rich and embellishing. I wander around them day after day, and my eye is not satisfied with seeing.

"Independently of those associations, which it is superfluous to dwell upon; the simplicity, correctness, and harmony of their proportions, and the delicacy and exquisite finishing of each part excites the highest admiration. Alas! the hand of the spoiler has ravaged them, it has anticipated the triumphs of time, and the fierce barbarian and tasteless antiquary have conspired to pillage this peerless city, even of the sad relics of her glory.

"You would have quarrelled with my vehemence and enthusiasm ten times a-day if you had been my companion in this journey; but there are scenes, and spots in this land, which would have kindled

the latent spark, even in your heart;—you, who pique yourself upon excelling in the art of ruling your own spirit.

"Who, that contemplates the Parthenon, does not share the indignation expressed by men of feeling and genius? No fabled fairy-palace was ever half so beautiful; and soon, not one stone will remain upon another. We may curse the desolating spirit of war, which spared not the 'thrice-consecrated shrine;' but what shall we say to those lovers of the arts, who come calmly in the spirit of peace and selfishness, with pickaxe and hammer, to deface and destroy.

"This very morning I examined the Citadel. From the spot where I stood, my eye commanded a boundless view, comprehending a thousand objects consecrated by history and poetry. I gazed with rapture on mountains, islands, ruins, seas, the very names of which are dear and inspiring. Alas! on this very spot, once crowned with so many beautiful temples, which had so often echoed the footsteps of the hero, or

the choral hymn of the virgin priestess, amidst the ruins of the monuments of Pericles, and the works of Phidias, now rises the paltry habitation of the Disdar Aga, or Turkish governor, who knows no more of the names which make our hearts throb, and glow, and burn within us, than a Hottentot, or Esquimaux.

"Oh! it is heart-breaking, to look at this beautiful land, and reflect that it is peopled only by tyrants and slaves. If I had half your eloquence, Maitland, I would play the part of Peter the hermit, and preach a crusade for the deliverance of the Greeks; and I would be your standard-bearer on the occasion, and win trophies to lay at Geraldine's feet. Ah! at that dear name other feelings resume their place. Turk and Greek are forgotten, and I can think only of our separation.

"Write quickly, and tell me what she does, and how she looks; whether my absence has faded the roses of her cheeks, or

or if she is cruel enough to be calm and happy.

"I have already written two *dutiful* epistles to my father and mother, this morning. Absence has a magical effect upon the home we leave behind; like the wand of an enchanter, it invests it with a thousand charms unfelt before. Though in the loveliest land beneath the sun, I sometimes feel all the horrors of an exile.

Adieu, dear Maitland. Sentiment is all wasted upon you, or I would conclude my letter with a well-turned period about my untravelled heart, &c. &c. but you will be contented with the plain assurance, that I am

"Faithfully yours,

"MONTAGUE MOWBRAY."

"P. S. The Athenian women are not at all handsome. I should never be obliged to say, —

'Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh, give me back my heart!

" Assure my sweet Geraldine, that if I had ten hearts, they would be hers. Plato, Sophocles, and Aristotle knew something of taste, and beauty, as well as of divine philosophy, and chose foreign fair ones for their favourites."

CHAP. V.

It was during an evening walk from the Vicarage, to Woodlands, that Mr. Maitland read this letter to Geraldine.

The summer sun was shining brightly; the little brook, over which they passed, caught its slanting rays, and sparkled, and danced in the beam. The reapers were binding up the yellow sheaves, and their song and laugh floated joyously on the breeze.

Geraldine's heart bounded lightly within her bosom, and the tear of extasy trembled in her eye. Whether the brightness and beauty of Nature heightened these emo-

tions or whether they would have been the same,

> Had chill November's surly blast,
> Made fields and forests bare.

let lovers and metaphysicians determine.

When Mr. Maitland closed the letter, she looked around, and nothing met her eye but sights of bliss; she was enjoying one of those rare and precious moments in which the heart appears suddenly endued with a new capacity for happiness; and had joyless winter reigned, her fancy would have thrown its rainbow hue over every surrounding object.

She entered the drawing-room at Woodlands with the light step that indicates a buoyant heart, with an exhilaration of spirits which seemed to bid defiance to care.

As she approached the tea-table, she heard Mrs. Mowbray exclaim: —

" Most extraordinary! it is quite incredible."

"I think it neither the one nor the other," said Mr. Mowbray; "are not estates bought and sold every day?"

"Oh, you profess never to be surprised at any thing," replied Mrs. Mowbray: "I would not be like you for the world; surprise has the same effect upon the mind, that an electric shock has upon the body; it produces a sort of delightful excitation which you never feel."

"I am glad, for your sake, to hear that it is so delightful, my dear," said Mr. Mowbray: "you will excuse my preferring the steady pulse of health to the ebb and flow of fever."

"There never is any ebb and flow in your mind," returned his lady; "it resembles those seas in which there are no tides; it is deep, and calm, and still; but give me the sparkle, the dash, the sound, the delicious variety that may be found in those that change with the changing moon."

"In these tideless seas," said Mr. Mow-

bray, "you are not annoyed, at any rate, with sound and fury signifying nothing."

"No, you are not annoyed with sound, but you are stupified with quiet: however, to return to the subject of my surprise, I appeal to you, Geraldine; is it not surprising, — incredible, that your father should part with his pretty little darling estate in Devonshire?"

"Part with it!" exclaimed Geraldine, turning pale.

"I think he must be out of his senses," continued Mrs. Mowbray; "but it certainly is advertised in this paper, which, by-the-by, is nearly a fortnight old. I referred to it for an advertisement that I wished to see, and my eye was caught by this, which I most assuredly did *not* wish to see."

She handed the paper to Geraldine, who examined it in silent dismay, a tear slowly stealing down her cheek.

The estate in question had been the home of her infancy, where she had sported

away the careless hours of childhood, and been greeted a thousand times with the smile of maternal love. It had been her mother's favourite residence, and Mr. Beresford, on leaving England, had given strict orders that it might be kept in perfect order, and expressed an intention of residing there nearly half the year. What strange revolution of feeling, what new combination of circumstances, could induce him thus to part with it?

Vague and indefinable apprehensions filled the heart of Geraldine. Her father's silence had before occasionally excited them; but separated as they were by sea and land, she could always find relief for her fears in the uncertain conveyance of foreign letters, and all the probable and possible accidents that might befal them. At this moment the veil seemed suddenly removed; the mystery of his silence revealed. His feelings must have undergone a complete change; the omission which she had attributed to accident was probably

the result of indifference, if not of alienation. Grief, and a degree of irritation which she could not controul, struggled in her bosom; and, unable to listen quietly to a discussion of the subject, she abruptly left the tea-table.

"Poor Geraldine!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "she is amazingly shocked, I see, at this news; and, to be sure, it is a most provoking, unaccountable circumstance; what can it all mean?"

"It means," said Mr. Mowbray, "that Mr. Beresford is no longer disconsolate."

"Disconsolate!—no, I dare say he has half a dozen mistresses."

"Half a dozen would be easily dismissed," observed Mr. Mowbray; "one might be formidable."

"But still, if he had as many as Mahomet, what have they to do with his estate?" said Mrs. Mowbray.

"Nothing in the world, but to squander it."

"I declare, it makes me quite nervous to think of it," continued his lady.

"When a man of fifty plays the fool," said Mr. Mowbray, "he generally does it effectually."

"Happily, it is not in the power of a mistress to ruin him completely, even if she amuses herself with dissolving pearls," observed Mrs. Mowbray; "for he cannot get rid of the Yorkshire estate; but, to tell you the truth, I always hoped that pretty compact little West Grove, would be part of Geraldine's dowry."

"I am afraid a daughter-in-law, whose *virtues* were her only dowry, would be rather unwelcome to you," said Mr. Mowbray.

"Oh! I should never recover the shock of receiving one of those pretty Pamelas, rich only in beauty and virtue. They are sure to have a dozen children, 'lovely like themselves;' and how, upon earth, are they to be provided for? However, there is no fear of such a catastrophe in the

present case; Geraldine can never belong to such a class."

"You have not heard lately from Mr. Beresford, I think," said Mr. Mowbray.

"Not for an age," replied she. "I shall write immediately to enquire into all these mysteries."

"And do you expect him to reveal the truth, and proclaim himself a fool?" asked Mr. Mowbray.

"I don't expect that he will reveal the truth; but I hope to discover it."

"Writing is of little use in these cases," observed Mr. Mowbray; "you will probably irritate without influencing him."

"I think his mind a very manageable one," said Mrs. Mowbray; "it is like a musical instrument that yields sweet sounds, or discord, according to the skill of the person who plays on it."

"All depends, then, upon the hands into which he happens to fall," said Mr. Mowbray.

"Entirely," replied she: "there is no

thing positive about him; his qualifications are all of the negative kind; he is not tall—he is not short—he is not handsome—he is not ugly—he is not learned—he is not ignorant—he is not liberal—he is not parsimonious; in short, he has just that mediocrity which prudent men think so safe, and men of genius so wearisome."

"Even the leaden mantle of mediocrity did not weigh him down in his wife's time," said Mr. Mowbray.

"No; she contrived to give dignity and importance—nay, even a sort of lustre, to his character. Mr. Beresford's benevolence was so extensive; Mr. Beresford's advice so judicious; Mr. Beresford's family so well regulated: like the automaton chess-player, his moves were surprisingly skilful and masterly; but he was but an automaton, after all."

"And now," said Mr. Mowbray, "he is playing another game."

"And a very different one, I am afraid,"

added his lady; "but I must enter the lists against these captivating Signoras."

"If you propose personally to throw down your gauntlet, you had better take Geraldine with you as your page."

"Do you really think a journey to Italy expedient?" enquired Mrs. Mowbray, looking with some surprise at her husband.

"You have done mischief enough by recommending this continental tour to vour brother," said Mr. Mowbray; "you had better, like Penelope, unweave the web you have woven, if possible; but I am afraid it will be past your skill. If you could estimate so well the calibre of his mind, why expose him to the influence of foreign temptation?"

"It is mortifying to be compelled to acknowledge one's errors; but I really wished to get him out of the way of the gentle ladies, who united the most tender compassion for *poor* Mr. Beresford's feelings, to the most heartfelt admiration of his estate."

"That he might escape an ambuscade, you exposed him to the dangers of a siege."

"Well, the most skilful generals blunder now and then," said Mrs. Mowbray, laughing.

"If this error be retrieved at all," returned Mr. Mowbray, "it must be by a *coup de main*. Parley and negociation will be unavailing."

"What would I not give to be at Florence at this moment," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "when shall we set off?"

"Pray, do you mean, by this imperial pronoun, to include me?" enquired Mr. Mowbray.

"Certainly," replied his lady.—

"Because I beg to say," continued he, that I have not the slightest intention of leaving England, especially on the quixotic expedition of detaching a man from one or more mistresses."

"I do not desire your assistance," said Mrs. Mowbray; "it would do nothing but mischief. On these occasions men never

succeed; they do not know how to manage: they can shake their heads, remonstrate, and dictate; but they cannot, like women, manœuvre and triumph."

"Remember the fate of Alnaschar, my dear," said Mr. Mowbray, with a smile. "Neither journey nor triumph are yet achieved. Pray, will this effort be made for your brother — or his daughter — or his money?"

"My motives, like the motives of all other human beings, are of a mixed nature," said Mrs. Mowbray; "you know there is no such thing as singleness of heart in this wicked world: not one Parson Adams to be found now, for love or money. For my part, I make no pretensions to this quality, which every body praises and no one possesses."

"I know it, my dear," said Mr. Mowbray; "I have long been perfectly aware, that you are neither better nor worse than the rest of the world."

"Really, Mr. Mowbray, you are too flattering."

"You plan and plot," continued he, without noticing her exclamation; "and who does not? kings and emperors manœuvre, and so do their subjects, from the prime minister to the beggar. Society is something like a piece of tapestry: that part which is presented to the eye forms a fair picture enough; but the knots, and numberless stitches and contrivances by which this effect is produced, are wisely kept out of sight."

"It is well they are," said Mrs. Mowbray; "or we should not long be in good humour with each other."

While Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray were discussing Mr. Beresford's weakness, and the weakness of human nature, Geraldine was endeavouring to quell the murmuring spirit that rose in her heart, and to reason herself into patience and submission. The glow of hope and happiness that had filled it to overflowing an hour before, became every

moment more faint; and the idea of her father's neglect and desertion weakened her confidence in every other human being.

A fond recollection of her mother blended itself with this train of thought, and she felt a strong wish to see once more, before it passed into the hands of a stranger, that home of joy and peace, which, associated with this image, appeared almost sacred in her eyes.

On returning to the drawing-room, she expressed this wish to Mrs. Mowbray, who, intent upon the journey to Italy, and already surrounded by maps, tours, and guides, only shook her head while Geraldine was speaking, and exclaimed, —

"It is not to be done, my dear child! we must travel, indeed, and with as much speed as 'William of Deloraine, good at need;' but to still fairer climes than that of Devonshire."

She imparted the project to Geraldine, who listened to it with trembling eagerness,

and with many apprehensions respecting her father.

So long a journey, thus suddenly resolved upon, convinced her that Mrs. Mowbray had fears which she did not choose to avow. Sometimes she fancied that secret intelligence had reached her; but her disengaged manner, and the surprise occasioned by the advertisement, contradicted this idea.

Geraldine could not be persuaded of the impracticability of visiting Devonshire. A fortnight at least must elapse, before the preparations for their voyage could be completed, and three days surely might be spared.

Mrs. Mowbray objected to this needless fatigue and waste of spirits.

"Why should you go, my dear?" said she, "you will only weep, and wail, and feel as Eve did when she bade farewell to the flowers of Eden. Do, pray, stay quietly at home, and spare yourself all the heart-aches you can."

"Oh! it would be a pleasure, a luxury to me, to see them once more," exclaimed Geraldine, pursuing the train of her own thoughts, unconvinced by Mrs. Mowbray's reasoning.

"Well, then, my dear," returned her aunt, "it will give you an opportunity of exercising the virtue of self-denial, which is one of the roads to heaven, according to your creed and Mr. Fullarton's. Poor little thing," continued she, patting her cheek, "you look as if you liked it rather better in theory than practice; however, don't blush so about the matter. I do not profess to value consistency as much as some people. Those persons who pique themselves upon consistency, have too much starch and buckram to please me. I have a perfect dread of them."

"But does consistency always imply severity of morals?" said Geraldine: "I think I have known persons consistent even in error."

"Vastly well, my dear!" said Mrs. Mow-

bray, "I give you credit for that dexterous hit; but I will not accept the praise of consistency, even in this ambiguous shape. A character for consistency, is the most inconvenient thing in the world. If I ever professed it, I should feel just like a caged bird, the poor thing is perpetually peeping through the bars of its prison, and longing to soar, east and west, and north and south, but it is compelled always to utter the monotonous wail, 'I can't get out.'"

Geraldine, too intent upon the idea of revisiting Devonshire, to be amused with Mrs. Mowbray's wit, was silent for a few minutes, and then said,—

"Possibly we should meet Mr. Copeland, at West Grove, and learn what instructions he has lately received from my father."

This was precisely a suggestion calculated to influence Mrs. Mowbray.

"A happy thought Geraldine," said she, "it certainly would be desirable to have an interview with Copeland, before we leave England. My brother's, 'John of

the Scales,' must surely be well acquainted with the state of his affairs; and, perhaps, with his secrets."

Geraldine disclaimed the idea of becoming acquainted with her father's secrets, through such a medium."

"You are very right my dear," said Mrs. Mowbray, "by all means confine yourself to lawful inquiries after his health and welfare, but as you are not the keeper of my conscience, I shall feel perfectly at liberty to cross-question him as much as I please. I will mention the scheme to Mr. Mowbray, and if the answer of the oracle be favourable, we will set off for Devonshire to-morrow."

CHAP. VI.

It was with feelings of melancholy gratification that Geraldine approached the little village adjoining West Grove.

On an evening like the present, calm, still, and beautiful, she had passed through it the last time, leaning on the arm of her mother. The labourers, returning with slow and wearied step from their daily toil, had quickened their pace, at her approach, and bowed in silent gratitude to their benefactress. The little children had ceased their sports on the green, and run to claim a smile from the kind lady. The "busy housewife" had left her wheel, to drop a courtesy, and call down blessings upon her.

More than five years had since passed, but the scene was fresh as yesterday in Ge-

raldine's recollection. She contrasted it sorrowfully with the present moment. As their gay equipage drove rapidly through the village, the returning labourer stopped for a moment at the sound of the carriage, and then continued 'homeward to plod his weary way.' The little children, shading their eyes from the beams of the setting sun, stared for an instant at the carriage, and quickly resumed their noisy sport. She felt like an alien, amidst objects dear and familiar.

At length they entered the well-remembered gate, leading immediately to West Grove, and casting a rapid and eager glance around, she became silent from excess of emotion.

The softness of twilight was succeeding the glow of evening; but still she could clearly distinguish every object. All were beautiful — all unchanged. The trees, under the shade of which she had so often played, still flung their broad arms across the turf in wild magnificence; the axe had

not been suffered to despoil their beauty. The groups of myrtle and flowering shrubs, more luxuriant than ever, waved their tender branches in the cool evening breeze; and the gadding woodbine 'wasted around its rich perfume.'

"And this sweet place is to pass into the hands of a stranger!" exclaimed Geraldine; "Oh! if my father could have seen it once more, surely, he would not have parted with it for ever."

"It is a strange business, indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Mowbray, rousing, at the sound of her voice, from a reverie into which she had fallen. "I am all impatience to unravel the mystery; quite as eager for a sight of Mr. Copeland and his brown wig, as Elize was for an interview with her 'sylph husband;' but I don't know when that will happen, for we creep as if we had borrowed Cinderella's mice and pumpkin. Thank Heaven!" exclaimed she, after a short pause, "we are within sight of the house; for this dream-



ing light and their stupid pace have almost sent me to sleep."

In a few minutes the carriage stopped; and Geraldine, with a beating heart, followed Mrs. Mowbray into the hall. They made their way, among trunks and packing cases, to the library: — there, bare walls and empty shelves presented themselves: the pictures and books had disappeared.

Geraldine, struck by the change, was no longer able to restrain her tears.

"I hope you will excuse the confusion, Ma'am," said the servant who conducted them; "but, Mr. Davidson, the gentleman who has bought the house, is in such a hurry to get in, that we are all quite at sixes and sevens."

"The estate is sold, then," said Mrs. Mowbray; "and, pray, who is this Mr. Davidson?"

"A great India Nabob, I think they say, Ma'am," replied the servant.

"Rich and tasteless, of course;" ex-

claimed Mrs. Mowbray, turning to Geraldine. "Mr. Copeland is here, to superintend the business, I suppose?" continued she, again addressing the servant.

"Yes, Ma'am; but I am not certain that he is within."

"I will thank you to let him know of our arrival, if he is to be found," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"The die is cast, then," continued she, as soon as the servant had quitted the room. "This will be a farewell visit at West Grove."

Geraldine vainly endeavoured to rally her spirits: memory was too busy. This room, now so forlorn and deserted, had often been the scene of her childish sports; and a thousand times resounded with her laughing voice. Her mother's work-table, by the side of which she had so often stationed herself, stood in its accustomed place: near it was the foot-stool, on which she sat to lisp her early lessons. She remembered the smile of ineffable tender-

ness with which those lessons had been listened to; the sweet caress that followed; and, as the tears trickled down her cheeks, longed to be a child again.

The entrance of the servant with tea interrupted her mournful musings. He informed Mrs. Mowbray that Mr. Copeland was arranging some business at a farm five miles distant, and would not be at West Grove till the morning.

Until the morning, then, Mrs. Mowbray was reluctantly compelled to wait; and while she was closeted with Mr. Copeland, Geraldine found her way to her mother's dressing-room; and again, the most affecting recollections filled her mind. There, with her little hands fondly clasped in those of her mother, had her morning and evening devotions been paid; there, many a fervent prayer had been offered up for her temporal and eternal happiness, and many a holy lesson sweetly taught.

From the dressing-room she wandered through the house and grounds; and from

thence to the village, lingering in every favourite spot, and looking, even at the most common objects, with that peculiar interest which is felt when we are about to part with them for ever.

She visited the school which had been established by Mrs. Beresford, the cottages which had so often been cheered by her bounty. Every where some proofs of her active and judicious benevolence presented themselves. Industry had been encouraged, ignorance enlightened, disease mitigated, affliction soothed.

Geraldine knew that these effects could not have arisen from the operation of casual impulse, and occasional feeling; and the principle to which they might be traced became every hour more precious in her estimation.

Mrs. Mowbray appeared anxious to set off as soon as her conference with Mr. Copeland had ended. She had ascertained that Mr. Beresford's expenditure during the last eighteen months had considerably

exceeded his income; Mr. Copeland had ventured to lay before him the state of affairs, and to propose certain retrenchments; he received in return only more urgent commands for remittances, and an order for the immediate sale of the West Grove estate: and that a confidential messenger was now on his way to Florence with the sum thus produced. Mr. Copeland concluded by saying that Mr. Beresford had parted with all his disposable property, and that his embarrassments must become formidable if a plan of retrenchment were not speedily adopted.

"Our measures must be prompt and decisive, Geraldine," said Mrs. Mowbray, when she had listened to this detail; "if we can persuade your father to return immediately to England, all may yet be well. I dare say we have ingenuity enough to break the rosy fetters that detain him in Italy."

"It is an office of so delicate a nature,"

returned Geraldine, "that I feel reluctant to engage in it."

"I may perhaps be mistaken," said Mrs. Mowbray; "there are several other ways of dissipating a good fortune, which he may have chosen. He may be exchanging his good English gold for bas-reliefs, and broken cornices; for pictures of saints, and statues of goddesses; but if he be spell-bound by a wicked enchantress, we must busy ourselves in preparing some counter-charm."

Geraldine thought it sacrilege to her mother's memory to admit such a suspicion; and yet a secret fear lurking in her heart induced her to ponder upon the best mode of conduct to be adopted.

She had long ceased to place implicit confidence in Mrs. Mowbray's judgment. She disdained the by-ways and crooked policy familiar to that lady, believing the simple truth, that he only who, 'walketh uprightly, walketh surely.'

Even if Mrs. Mowbray's suspicions were

well founded, she doubted whether it would be right to dive into her father's secrets, and intrude unbidden into his presence. She stated these objections to Mrs. Mowbray with all the energy and simplicity of truth, and they were opposed with all the ingenuity of sophistry.

The voyage to Italy was resolved upon; and Mrs. Mowbray had only one regret,—that Montague was too distant to be their escort.

" Mr. Mowbray has resolved not to go," said she; " and, indeed, I am not very anxious to press him into the service. He is the most tiresome travelling companion on earth, for he has seen every thing under the sun, or at least, every thing that he desires to see; and always posts on as if life and death depended on our reaching the Black Lion, or White Hart at a given moment. I don't believe he would go three paces out of his road for a laurel-leaf from Virgil's tomb, or a branch of Shakspeare's mulberry-tree; so we have not much to re-

gret in him: but where to find a substitute just at this moment, I know not."

This difficulty, however, did not prove insurmountable. The subject being discussed in Mr. Fullarton's presence, he lamented that his own feeble health prevented his taking a journey which must be necessarily rapid; but proposed that the ladies should accept the protection of Mr. Maitland, whom, he felt assured, would be happy to supply Montague's place, as far as his place could be supplied.

This proposition was gladly acceded to by Mrs. Mowbray, and highly agreeable to Geraldine. She had the utmost confidence in Mr. Maitland's judgment; and as the friend of Montague, felt privileged to consult him upon any point in which her own was insufficient.

CHAP. VII.

PREVIOUS to their leaving England, Geraldine had a brief interview with Fanny. She found Mr. Spenser, as usual, absent; and Fanny distributing her smiles and wit amongst an idle, gay, licentious circle.

Her manner, always light and careless, had now acquired a freedom which terrified Geraldine. She was surrounded by admirers openly contending for her favour, who met neither with reproof nor discouragement. Among these, Sir Henry Ireton, a young baronet of dissipated habits, and fascinating manners, appeared the most prominent. The rest were tolerated; he was distinguished. The attentions of other young men were received as a tribute; his seemed to be enjoyed as a

privilege. Confidential whispers, and answering glances passed between them.

Geraldine felt sick at heart as she bade her farewell. She was sporting like a playful child on the brink of a precipice, unconscious or heedless of danger; and no friendly hand appeared to guide or rescue her.

"Shall I not make one effort," said Geraldine, shuddering at the picture which presented itself to her mind; "but, alas! in what language, to which she will listen, can I address her." She snatched a pen, and with a rapid and trembling hand, wrote the following letter.

"*To Mrs. Spenser.*

"Our short interview, yesterday, my dear Fanny, left so distressing an impression on my mind, that I cannot leave England without venturing to expostulate with you on the system of conduct you are pursuing: pardon the freedom of the expression; my time is too limited, and my

heart too full, to allow of fastidiousness in the choice of words; I must speak plainly.

"I recollect and feel the peculiar trials of your domestic life. I never think of them without deep and painful sympathy; but, were they ten times as keen and aggravated as they now are, I should implore you to remember that there are woes, to which, even yours would appear light as air.

"Can the sorrows inflicted by the caprice, or negligence of a beloved object be for a moment compared with the pangs arising from wounded fame, from conscious guilt, from self-inflicted degradation? You are not formed to endure patiently the look of scorn, the smile of triumph, the cold contempt of the world.

"Forgive my fears, forgive the expression of them. Believe that nothing but the sincerest affection could have extorted it.

"My dear, dear, Fanny, do not throw this letter aside with the playful wilfulness which I have so often witnessed. Oh!

that I knew of any language that would affect your heart.

"I might have urged considerations far more awful and authoritative, than those to which I have alluded; I might have spoken of consolations which can soothe the deepest misery, and shed a softening beam over the darkest hour. But you would have listened with impatience. I can only hope that a day may come, when they will have their full effect.

"I once more conjure you, for your own sake, for that of your dear child, and for the sake of all who love you; to consider the many blessings which still surround you; to endure with resignation and dignity the evils of your lot; and not, by vain attempts to escape or resent them, plunge yourself into hopeless, and irretrievable misery.

"Accept, my dear Fanny, the kindest and best wishes of

"Your affectionate

"GERALDINE."

The next morning, a note was put into her hands, the contents of which were as follows: —

"*To Miss Beresford.*

"How am I to answer your eloquent letter, my dear Geraldine. Shall I resent your fears, and tell you that you might as well have trembled for that peerless lady who withstood the wiles of Comus? Shall I descant upon the dignity of virtue, and my own high sense of honour? or shall I confess, that retaliation would be sweet to an outraged heart; that there are moments, in which I feel so reckless and desperate, that your fears and forebodings, may possibly be verified.

"I did not hastily throw your letter aside: for a moment, it occasioned an exquisite pain at my heart; but the pang is over.

"I make no promises; any thing is better than wearing away life, in silent endurance. If one scheme of happiness fails, is it not wise to try another? Is it not better

to chase a butterfly from bush to bush, and flower to flower, or to pursue a smiling phantom, than to sit and pine in sullen discontent?

"I might have dissembled with you; but your earnest, candid letter, deserved at least a candid answer.

"Farewell; I wish that in your voyage to Italy, and in the voyage of life, you may meet only with soft gales and smooth seas: my bark is toiling through stormy waves, beneath a cloudy sky; but I would rather suffer shipwreck at once, amidst rocks and whirlpools, than be left, like Ariadne, to waste my life in wearisome loneliness.

"Believe, dear Geraldine, that whether erring or prudent, happy or wretched, I shall always be

"Your affectionate
"FANNY."

Geraldine's fears were rather increased than allayed by this letter. Never had she felt so forcibly, or lamented so keenly, the

fatal defects of Fanny's education and habits: never had she been so fully sensible of the inestimable value of those principles, the fruits of which are gentleness, patience, and long-suffering.

Of Mr. Spenser, indeed, she could not think without indignation, and she meditated upon his inexcusable conduct, and the faults and failings of lovers and husbands, till her thoughts insensibly wandered to Montague. She shuddered at the idea that the defects of his character, in some degree, resembled those of Mr. Spenser; and resolved, however severe the internal conflict she might endure, however dreary and desolate the path of life might appear, never to become his wife, if he again gave her reason to doubt the stability of his affections.

It became her most anxious wish, to see his conduct regulated by pure Christian principles, that they might be united, not only by the tender bonds of love, but in one faith, and one hope.

CHAP. VIII.

In a few days all preparations were completed, and they embarked for Italy in a vessel bound immediately to Leghorn.

The voyage, though a favourable one, appeared indescribably tedious to Mrs. Mowbray, who declared, that she quite agreed with Dr. Johnson, in defining a ship to be a prison, in which is incurred the risk of being drowned; that, for her part, she never desired to behold the sea again, except from a viranda at some fashionable bathing place; and, as to its magnificence and sublimity, they did vastly well to think and talk of, but nothing could be more tiresome or monotonous.

To Geraldine, the voyage had not appeared insupportably tedious. Mr. Mait-

land's conversation had afforded her a rich and constant resource; and she could not regret the opportunity, thus afforded her, of becoming more intimate with his character. Its admirable consistency excited a feeling of affectionate respect. Without any ostentation of piety, without any repulsive solemnity of manner, he never forgot, the great cause to which he had devoted himself: and amidst his various and delightful attainments, piety always appeared conspicuous and pre-eminent.

To the eye of taste, nature in all her beautiful variety, presents a delightful picture; but her loveliness excites a far more touching and sacred emotion, when contemplated by a mind in which refined taste and devotional habits are happily blended: to such a mind, the magnificent spectacle of the ocean is something more than a show to be gazed at for a moment and forgotten; when sleeping in calm beauty beneath the morning beam, it whispers a tale of mercy; when rising in majesty and

grandeur with the freshening gale, it tells of mighty and resistless power, and leads the devout spirit to communion with Him, whose 'way is in the deep, whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known.'

Many such emotions had Geraldine felt while contemplating, with Mr. Maitland, that 'glorious mirror,' that 'deep and dark blue ocean, boundless, endless, and sublime ; the image of eternity,' and though she rejoiced with Mrs. Mowbray in their safe arrival, she dwelt upon the recollection of their voyage with feelings of pleasure and gratitude.

Being anxious to reach Florence as soon as possible, the party left Leghorn the following morning, and proceeded with the utmost expedition to Florence.

Geraldine's heart beat with strong and varying emotions, as they approached this beautiful city, It was not its enchanting vale, glowing beneath the beams of a set-

ting sun; its orchards and groves smiling in rural beauty; its far-famed river, the theme of many a bewitching strain, that occupied her thoughts; her eye wandered over these objects, scarcely sensible of their charms. She could think only of her father; her imagination was busy in picturing their approaching interview; and feelings, at once, timid, tender, and anxious, filled her heart to overflowing.

On arriving at the inn where they were to pass the night, Mrs. Mowbray made some enquiries, by which she ascertained that Mr. Beresford resided in a villa at a short distance from the town. The master of the house said, that he had the honour of receiving him on his arrival at Florence, and that he had remained at his house until he hired the villa which he now occupied. Mrs. Mowbray desired to know if a messenger could be sent thither that night; and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, wrote the following billet to Mr. Beresford.

"My dear brother;

"You will fancy yourself in a dream when you see, from whence this note is dated; but nothing can be more certain than that I am at this moment in Florence, and that Geraldine is by my side.

"The motive of our journey I will not now explain: I will only add, that if you feel half the anxiety for an interview that we do, you will be with us at the dawn of day. Adieu, till we meet.

"GEORGIANA MOWBRAY."

Geraldine passed a restless night, and rose at day-break in the fond hope of soon embracing her father. She waited with tolerable patience, though with a secret feeling of mortification, till summoned to breakfast; but when the silent meal was finished, and no note or message arrived, her restlessness became uncontrollable. She walked up and down the room listening with breathless eagerness to every little noise, fancying that every distant sound

announced her father's approach, — that every footstep was his; but vainly she looked, — vainly she listened.

Four tedious hours passed away, and the eagerness of expectation was blended with the most acute and painful disappointment. Her agitation was, at length, in some degree calmed by Mrs. Mowbray's suggesting that probably Mr. Beresford was from home. She eagerly caught the consoling idea, and by constant recurrence to it, the evening passed off with tolerable tranquillity.

Another note was dispatched by Mrs. Mowbray the following morning, with instructions to the messenger to wait for an answer.

Geraldine made a strong effort to command her feelings, to be reasonable and patient till his return; but the time of his absence appeared insupportably tedious. She looked at her watch every five minutes, fancied that it had stopped, listened to it,

—looked again,—and became every moment more tremulous and agitated.

In about three hours the servant returned, and delivered a note to Mrs. Mowbray. It was in a female hand, and contained the following words:—

"Madam,

"The urgent desire of your messenger for an answer to the letter of which he has this morning been the bearer, has compelled me to open it, though addressed to Mr. Beresford; and I am deeply grieved to communicate the afflicting intelligence, that he is at this moment very dangerously ill, and unable to rise from his bed: consequently the interview you request cannot possibly take place. I have the honour to be, Madam,

"Your most obedient Servant,

"LAURA BERESFORD."

Geraldine, pale and trembling with emotion, fixed her eyes on Mrs. Mowbray whilst she read this note; and observing

the rapid changes of her countenance, intreated in a voice almost inarticulate, with terror and agitation, to hear its contents.

"They are of a distressing nature, indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Mowbray, with her eyes still fixed on the signature; "but we must hope for the best."

Geraldine sunk on a chair; and, unable to speak, could only stretch out her hand for the letter.

"Your father is ill, my dear," continued Mrs. Mowbray, still retaining the letter, and folding it up as she spoke; "and I am not certain that we can be admitted to him to day."

"Not admitted," repeated Geraldine, the most dreadful apprehensions crowding into her heart; "—then he is dying; he is dead," exclaimed she, shuddering with horror, and shaking in every limb.

Mrs. Mowbray endeavoured to soothe and comfort her, by an earnest assurance that her fears were without foundation.

"If heis still alive," said Geraldine, start-

ing up, and speaking in a tone of recovered energy; "no consideration on earth shall keep me an hour longer from his bedside. Who can have the right to exclude me? surely no one will refuse me the mournful privilege of watching by my father."

She urged Mrs. Mowbray to order the carriage immediately, and hastened away to make the preparations that were necessary.

"What is to be done," said Mrs. Mowbray, turning to Mr. Maitland, and putting the letter into his hand, as Geraldine quitted the room; "this poor child has no suspicion of the formidable rival she has to encounter. I always suspected that there was a mistress in the wood; but if this be not a usurpation of the style and title of Beresford, affairs are in a more desperate state than I apprehended."

"However distressing an interview with this person may be," said Mr. Maitland, deeply concerned for Geraldine, "I think it should take place immediately. Miss

Beresford ought certainly to be allowed the privilege she so earnestly desires: it will be some relief to her feelings; and in the performance of this painful duty, she will, I trust, find a degree of consolation."

"It is very likely," said Mrs. Mowbray, after musing over the letter for some minutes, "that she may be only Mrs. Beresford, by courtesy; and that there is some finesse in this account of my brother's illness. These sort of people are as full of stratagems as a prime-minister; and if she be only a sultana for the time being, she is trembling, I suppose, lest our arrival should precipitate the decline and fall of her empire."

Mr. Maitland, who thought this conjectural reasoning very unsatisfactory, proposed ordering the carriage immediately; and Mrs. Mowbray, rejoicing in her own sagacity, and persuading herself that the account of her brother's illness was a stroke of desperate policy, to retard or prevent their meeting, declared that she was quite willing to storm the castle, if necessary.

Geraldine, on her return to the room, felt astonished at the renewed cheerfulness of her voice and manner.

"Do not distress yourself so much, my dear," said she; "I really hope there is no reason for it: you know I always hinted that there was a lady in the case — an enchantress, of course, as wary and wily as any of her sisterhood: let this hint console you. We shall soon see," added she, as they stepped into the carriage, "what form she will think proper to assume,— whether we shall have an Armida to resist, or a dragon to combat."

Geraldine felt rather bewildered than consoled, by Mrs. Mowbray's hints; but she derived more support from the words of kind encouragement, and the quiet attentions offered by Mr. Maitland, during their ride. Involuntarily she caught his arm, as the carriage stopped, and clung to him for support, in the trying scenes which she anticipated.

CHAP. IX.

At any other moment the magnificent appearance of the villa, and its beautiful situation, would have fixed Geraldine's attention; but at present totally insensible to the charms, either of nature or art; she crossed a hall adorned with exquisite statues, and entered a saloon hung with the finest paintings, without perceiving either.

Mr. Maitland led her to a sofa, endeavouring to fortify her mind, and to suggest ideas of hope and comfort.

They had been seated only a few minutes, when the door was thrown open, and a lady of a tall and commanding figure entered the room, and advanced to meet them. A slight shade of sadness might be traced upon her brow; but her step was firm, and her man-

ner unembarrassed. As she approached, Geraldine's heart beat with dreadful violence; she made an attempt to speak, but could not articulate a single word.

Mrs. Mowbray, who never for a moment lost her self-possession, returned the stranger's salutation with ease and grace; professed that she was sorry to intrude on her so abruptly; but that the afflicting intelligence she had communicated, rendered them rather more than less desirous of seeing Mr. Beresford immediately; and that she presumed no opposition could be made to so reasonable a request.

The lady replied, that Mr. Beresford was becoming rapidly worse; and that she did not think his physicians would consent to the interview.

At this intelligence, Geraldine, in an agony of grief, earnestly intreated for immediate admission to her father. The stranger appeared to be touched with sympathy, and the physicians, who were in attendance, were summoned. They had quitted their patient,

and expressed a hope that the young lady would spare herself the shock of seeing him in his present state. They acknowledged that it would not be injurious to Mr. Beresford; for they were sorry to say that he was now incapable of recognizing any one.

Geraldine's grief became every moment more intense; but she reiterated her request, and was at length conducted to her father's apartment.

She paused a moment on entering the chamber, terrified at the profound stillness which pervaded it;—this stillness was quickly interrupted by a low and feeble groan. With desperate eagerness Geraldine approached the bed, and beheld the convulsed and dying countenance of her father. A woman, apparently a nurse, was supporting his head with one hand, and with the other wiping the dews of death from his forehead.

In unutterable agony she threw herself on her knees by the bed-side, and clasped

the cold and clammy hand which lay extended before her. Another interval of silence, broken only by her own sobs, succeeded. In a few minutes she felt her hand grasped with violence; — she looked up;—alas! it was not the tender clasp of recognition, but the clench of sudden agony. The last fearful struggle was over — death had claimed his victim.

In speechless horror Geraldine remained kneeling by the bed-side, till gently raised and led away by Mrs. Mowbray and the attendants. She yielded, without resistance, to their wishes; no word escaped her lips; her death-like paleness, and the convulsive shuddering which shook her frame, alone betraying the intensity of her feelings.

During many successive days she struggled in vain to meet this blow with humble resignation; her own efforts, and the soothing attentions of those around her, were equally unavailing. The shock had been too great; the dying countenance of

her father was incessantly present to her; she still felt the last rigid, convulsive grasp of his hand."

Such entire possession had this image taken of her mind, that the scenes and disclosures which followed seemed scarcely to rouse or interest her.

Upon Mrs. Mowbray they produced a very different effect. She had, indeed, felt both shocked and grieved at the unexpected death of Mr. Beresford: but when the first burst of natural feeling had subsided, she found so much to hear, to wonder at, and to relate, that little leisure remained for the indulgence of grief.

A few lines, hastily written by Mr. Maitland, had been immediately forwarded to Mr. Mowbray; and about a fortnight after the death of her brother he received the following letter from his lady: —

" *To H. Mowbray, Esq.*

" You are by this time acquainted with the sad event which has occurred since our

arrival in Florence; and you will easily imagine all we have felt and suffered on this melancholy occasion.*

"I do not know whether Mr. Maitland entered into any detail: perhaps he has already told you that my brother was ill only three days; he was seized with a fit of apoplexy, which, though not instantly fatal, left no hope of recovery; and expired half an hour after we reached his house.

"Geraldine is still overwhelmed with affliction; and, indeed, if I had not happily been born before 'nerves were invented,' I do not know how I should have sustained the shock.

"His death is not the sole misfortune we have to lament: sooner or later we learn to reconcile ourselves to losses of this nature; but how we are to become *reconciled* to the strange revolution that has taken place I know not. My heart really aches for Geraldine: fortune, in one of her capricious moods, has completely reversed her fate. This mistress, whom, even as a

mistress, I wished at the 'farthest verge of the green earth,' proves to be a lawful wedded wife; and, what is still more terrible, is the mother of a fair son, whom you might mistake for an infant Hercules.

"By what successful manœuvre the marriage was accomplished I have not yet learned: that it has actually taken place is too certain. I resisted conviction with desperate pertinacity for some time; but an interview with the Catholic priest and Protestant clergyman, who performed the marriage ceremony, have left me without a shadow of hope.

"My brother died without a will: the estate, of course, devolves upon his son; and his fortune, thanks to the ingenious extravagance of this 'foreign wonder,' is reduced to a complete wreck. All Geraldine's worldly wealth is now comprised in her mother's jointure; a very poor affair indeed — not more than two hundred a-year.

"What a fine theme this reverse will

afford to those who love to prose and moralise. I think I can hear all the common-place remarks that will be made upon the changes and chances of this mortal life.

"Mr. Maitland is one of those religious alchymists who pretend to extract gold from the most unpromising materials.

"I do not know how his eloquence may succeed with Geraldine; but it will certainly fail to convince me that bitter is sweet, and sweet bitter.

"I shall return from this luckless expedition as soon as Geraldine is well enough to travel, which, I hope, will be in a few days; and, till then, I reserve all descriptions and discussions.

"I never, in my life, longed more for the sight of my own fire-side; so impatient am I to talk over with you the causes and consequences of this disastrous discovery. Adieu, till we meet.

"Your affectionate

"G. Mowbray."

CHAP. X.

THE train of circumstances which had terminated in the union so much deplored by Mrs. Mowbray, was by no means fully understood by that lady; and of far too intricate and delicate a nature to be compressed into the compass of a letter.

Mr. Beresford, on his arrival at Florence, had intended, after remaining there a few weeks, to return to England. Travelling had ceased to please him; the zest of novelty was over, and the quiet joys of home, when contrasted with the wandering and solitary life he had lately led, presented themselves in softer and more attractive colours. Still, melancholy recollections mingled with this feeling; and, in recalling the ties and endearments of home,

he felt more keenly sensible of the vacuum which death had occasioned there. To escape as much as possible from these depressing thoughts, he busied himself with the many beautiful specimens of the fine arts to be found in Florence; and determined to enrich his collection of paintings, by purchasing good copies of the finest subjects in the Florentine gallery. For this purpose, he was introduced to Signor Morelli, an artist of eminence, who begged leave to show him some valuable specimens of the old masters in his own possession.

Mr. Beresford accepted the invitation, and accompanied him to his house. As they entered a saloon, hung with exquisite paintings, a lady whom Signor Morelli slightly named, rose, and with a passing bow to Mr. Beresford, immediately withdrew. Short as the interview had been, it had enabled him to discover, that her face and figure were extremely beautiful; and whilst Signor Morelli was descanting on

the matchless perfections of Titian and Claude, his eyes were often turned towards the door, in expectation that the lady would re-appear. The hope, however, was not realised; she continued invisible, and Mr. Beresford took his leave with a vague and indefinable feeling of curiosity, respecting the fair phantom,

In a few days he repeated his visit to Signor Morelli, and had again a transient view of the lady. His curiosity was rather stimulated than satisfied; for on expressing a fear that he disturbed her, she replied with the utmost grace and facility in English. Struck with the circumstance, and determined, if possible, to learn her history, he made some enquiries of an acquaintance in Florence, by which he ascertained, that the beautiful young woman, who had thus excited his admiration, filled the honourable station of mistress to Signor Morelli. Upon hearing this account, Mr. Beresford's curiosity became mingled with pity and

surprise, and these feelings were increased by every succeeding interview.

Signor Morelli courted his acquaintance with peculiar assiduity; he had frequent opportunities of contemplating the lady, and felt more inclined to soothe than to condemn her. There was an air of modesty diffused over her whole person; a downcast, timid, retiring manner, which seemed incompatible with the state of moral degradation in which she lived. Involuntarily, Mr. Beresford treated her with a degree of respect, which she appeared to receive as an unmerited kindness, claiming the deepest gratitude. Any allusion, however remote, that could be applied to her situation, seemed to rive her heart with anguish.

This suffering consciousness, this shrinking sensibility, united with exquisite beauty, awakened a powerful interest in the heart of Mr. Beresford. He compassionated the early fall of a being so richly

gifted by nature: daily intercourse was gradually established between them, and hour after hour, and day after day, glided away in her society.

The tale of her early life was unfolded with a modesty so bewitching, an air of penitence so exquisitely becoming, that Mr. Beresford gazed, with the blended pity and admiration which is felt on contemplating the fine portrait of a Magdalen.

Her mother, an English lady, had died when she was only in her twelfth year; and at the early age of fifteen, she had been induced, by the seductive blandishments of Signor Morelli, to take refuge in his house from poverty and privation. She hinted, that the tyranny of a harsh and unprincipled father had urged her to the rash step which now filled her mind with the bitterest regret. She had for ever forfeited her place in society, and must wear away her life a prey to secret remorse and anguish. Her beautiful eyes were turned upon Mr.

Beresford, at the conclusion of this little history; and he endeavoured, with all the eloquence he possessed, to reconcile the lady to herself. She seemed fully sensible of his kindness, and tenderly grateful for it; but he had great difficulty in convincing her, that he was not actuated by mere compassion; and she alluded, with a pathos the most touching, to the time when she might have won his admiration, instead of exciting his pity.

This was a point not easily settled: Mr. Beresford's assurances became more eloquent and tender. The fair Laura listened with downcast looks, and fervent expressions of gratitude; she shuddered whenever his return to England was mentioned; and though apparently too humble to expostulate, Mr. Beresford found the language of her pleading eyes absolutely resistless.

It has been said, that 'the words of love sleep in the ear that is too dull to comprehend its silence.'

Mr. Beresford was not thus dull; he perfectly comprehended the silence of his fair friend, and he had attained precisely the sober age, at which it is not a little flattering to the vanity of man, to excite an interest in the heart of a young and lovely woman.

He did not, however, yield without a struggle: to restore Laura to the privileges she had forfeited, he felt to be impossible; and reasoning wisely upon the cruelty of entangling her in a hopeless attachment, he resolved to pay her a farewell visit, and announce his intention of returning immediately to England.

On entering the room where she usually sat, he found that he could not have chosen a more inauspicious moment for the accomplishment of his purpose.

The lady was in a state of agitation, which his presence appeared to increase almost to distraction. Imagining that she had divined his intentions, and flattered by this excess of tenderness, he addressed her in the most soothing language. Laura

covered her face with both hands, and for some time her sobs alone were audible. As her agitation subsided, the most delicate embarrassment was visible on her countenance; her mind seemed labouring with some terrible secret which she could not conceal, and feared to unfold. Mr. Beresford tenderly conjured her to confide in him without hesitation; and after a struggle of feeling, apparently amounting to torture, she placed in his hand a letter, which had just been delivered to her from Signor Morelli.

In terms the most harsh and insulting, he declared it to be his fixed resolution never to see her more, and commanded her to leave his house at the expiration of three days. He alluded with barbarous irony to her attachment to Mr. Beresford, avowing that he willingly left the worthless prize to his rival: that he was already on his road to Rome, whither he meant to remove; and that he had let the villa she occupied to a friend, who would take possession of it in three days.

The result of this confidential communication may be easily conceived. Mr. Beresford believed himself bound by every tie of honour and compassion to protect the deserted Laura; and after a few hours passed in combating the delicate scruples of the lady, which were, however, mingled with many a tender and gratifying acknowledgement, she was prevailed upon to accept his protection.

CHAP. XI.

Several months elapsed, marked only by devoted gratitude on the part of Laura, and increasing affection on that of Mr. Beresford. She appeared to live only for him, and his taste and feelings were the standard by which every look and word were regulated.

He was particularly touched by her conduct whenever letters arrived from England. She expressed no curiosity, made no comment; but the liveliest alarm was painted on her countenance, and she clung to him with a trembling fondness, which betrayed all her fears and feelings.

It was not in Mr. Beresford's nature to resist such tenderness, and he carefully avoided all allusion to England, and to the

ties which might oblige him to return thither.

Laura's claim to his affectionate attentions acquired every day new force. She was likely to become a mother, and this circumstance appeared to have a most depressing effect upon her spirits. Mr. Beresford, frequently surprised her in tears, at his approach she wiped them hastily away, and endeavoured to smile; but, 'grief seemed heavy at her heart.' In vain did he conjure her to disclose the cause of her disquietude; she continued to preserve a mournful silence.

As the period of her expected confinement drew near, this gloom, amounted to despondency. She secluded herself entirely from company, receiving only the visits of her spiritual director, a catholic priest, with whom she frequently remained closeted for hours. After these interviews, she usually appeared in a state of absolute despair: amidst all this, the most passionate tenderness for Mr. Beresford, was still dis-

coverable. Trembling for her health, he again and again entreated her to open her heart unreservedly; but this request was always answered by a flood of tears. At length she entreated his permission to pass a few days with an old friend, at a short distance from Florence; and he consented, in the hope that the change might be beneficial.

This short separation, though made at her own request, appeared agonising to Laura: and Mr. Beresford, surprised at the extreme agitation of her spirits, placed her in the carriage, with a thousand tender injunctions and assurances. The day succeeding that of her departure he received the following letter:

"*To Mr. Beresford.*

"The moment I have so long dreaded is past; the terrible struggle is over, and I have parted for ever with the generous friend and protector, for whom I would

with transport have laid down my life. Oh! with what terror have I contemplated this fearful separation: so much do I love you, that deaf, to the voice of religion, and the clamorous reproaches of conscience, I would still cling to a life of sin and shame for the dear privilege of passing it with you. Let me not dwell upon the happiness I relinquish, but let me lay before you the reasons which have been sufficiently powerful to produce this sacrifice; though, alas! reason cannot reconcile, nor will time console me under it.

"When first I discovered the probability of my becoming a mother, the idea filled my heart with joy. I thought only of the endearing tie it would form between us; of the new claim that it would give me, on such a heart as yours: but too soon did reflection chase away these hopes.

"No fallacy can conceal from me, that weak and frail as I have proved myself, I must, as a mother, be the most wretched of human beings. With the love of virtue

glowing in my heart, with its precepts on my lips, I shall be a mark for the finger of scorn; and the tale of my dishonour will reach the ear and heart of my child. Let me then, by one great sacrifice, save myself from the shame and misery which must be the portion of a mother who owns not the sacred title of wife.

"My plans are decided. If it be the will of God that I should become the mother of a living child, it shall be placed under your care soon after its birth; and if your wretched Laura survives, she will pass the remnant of her miserable life within the walls of a convent, in penitence for her past sins, and in prayers for your future happiness. Oh! let it not be disturbed by too tender a recollection of me. So well am I acquainted with the generosity of your nature, that I know you will be strongly tempted to offer me a legal claim to your name. Had I listened to the advice of my friends, and the commands of my confessor, I should long ago have

availed myself of the common artifices of my sex, and with prayers and tears urged this request; but I have too high a sense of your excellence and dignity, even to form such a wish. No! the woman who is thus honoured should unite a spotless and unpolluted name, to the unspeakable tenderness of your unfortunate, but devoted

"LAURA.

"P. S. I conjure you not to follow me to my retreat. Do not, by kind but fruitless opposition, render my sad task impossible instead of difficult."

Though Laura conjured Mr. Beresford not to follow her to the retreat she had chosen, she had taken no pains to prevent his discovering it; and in less than half an hour after the perusal of this letter, he was proceeding towards it with all imaginable speed. Louis the Fourteenth did not travel with more lover-like dispatch to recall his gentle mistress, than Mr. Beresford in the pursuit of this fair fugitive. He de-

clared, that he who could be insensible to such fervid affection, such matchless disinterestedness, must be more or less than man; and claiming his right to an interview with her, he pleaded his cause and her own so successfully, that the lady, notwithstanding her *high sense of his dignity*, consented, though with the most delicate reluctance, to become his wife.

The ceremony was performed by her own confessor in the chapel of the convent, whither she had retired; and a few days after, according to the forms of the Protestant church, by an English clergyman at that time residing at Florence.

CHAP. XII.

TRANQUILLITY being thus purchased, Mr. Beresford was rewarded by the returning sunshine of Laura's smiles; and in less than a month she presented him with an heir.

The scene and circumstances awakened recollections of a mournful nature, and he could not cordially sympathise in the proud and triumphant feelings of Laura. He thought of his daughter with pity and regret, and recoiled from the idea of disclosing to her a marriage contracted under such auspices.

During the temporary separation occasioned by Laura's confinement, he had leisure to reconsider the past, and to anticipate the future.

The obstacles that opposed her introduc-

tion to English society presented themselves in formidable array. To delay the evil day, was the natural suggestion of a mind deficient in energy; and with a vain hope that time would render that practicable, which at present appeared impossible, he resolved to remain in Italy, and defer the disclosure of his marriage to some happier moment.

Laura's health was speedily re-established, and Mr. Beresford hoped that her society would charm away his newly awakened regrets; but no hope could be more fallacious. Laura, as Mr. Beresford's wife, and the mother of an heir to his estate, was no longer the gentle, winning, attractive being, who appeared so lovely, in her day of probation and dependence; she felt her own increased importance, and was anxious that it should be felt and acknowledged by others.

The modest simplicity of her establishment was exchanged for excessive splendour; and the arrangements of her house-

hold and her personal appearance were in a style of magnificence, which Mr. Beresford beheld with concern and astonishment. To hints of disapprobation, however, the lady was insensible; and to open and formal remonstrance, she opposed either tender reproaches, playful blandishments, or undisguised indifference.

Mr. Beresford involuntarily compared the present with the past, and contrasting the expensive and luxurious taste of Laura, with the refined and chaste simplicity of her whose place she filled, felt daily more reluctant to avow his marriage. Too deficient in firmness effectually to restrain the extravagance of his wife, his feeble opposition served only to embitter their domestic life.

In a few months after his marriage, he found himself encumbered with debts; and passed day after day in lamenting his own infatuation, and forming schemes of economy, which he had not courage to realise.

A suspicion that Laura, during the pe-

riod of their first acquaintance, was merely acting a part, now and then glanced across his mind; but it was too mortifying to his vanity, as a man and a lover, to be easily admitted: many circumstances, however, combined to corroborate the idea.

In an accidental meeting between his lady and Signor Morelli, he observed an interchange of playful and triumphant glances, which at once confirmed his suspicions, and excited his just indignation. To acknowledge, however, that he had been the dupe of a well-tutored actress, was too humiliating; and he devoured his chagrin in silence and secresy. This irritating discovery, and the certainty that the time approached when his marriage must be divulged, incessantly harassed his mind. Every letter, he received from England, became a source of inexpressible torture. The affectionate enquiries of Geraldine, and the light raillery of Mrs. Mowbray, were equally insupportable; he had no plausible excuse to offer for his protracted

stay in Italy, but dreaded alike a meeting with the daughter whom he still tenderly loved, and had so materially injured, and introducing as a wife, the woman by whom he now felt himself disgraced.

His health suffered from constant depression of mind, and the very little sympathy expressed by Laura at its visible decline, added to the bitterness of his self-reproaches.

With feelings of despondency and irritation, he examined minutely into the state of his affairs; and finding that the purchase money of the Devonshire estate, which he had just received, would be nearly consumed in liquidating the debts incurred by the thoughtless profusion of Laura, a scene of explanation and remonstrance with that lady ensued.

Mr. Beresford proposed a plan of economy, to which she positively refused to submit; he persisted with unusual earnestness, and Laura, provoked by this unexpected firmness, and intent only upon

retaliating the mortifications she was enduring, declared that her sole object in marrying, had been to recover the station in society which she had forfeited: that no consideration should induce her to live in the retirement which he proposed, with a man whom she never had, nor ever could love, and who was old enough to be her father.

Mr. Beresford, irritated beyond endurance, struggled in vain to repress the indignant feelings by which he was agitated. Every moment increased their violence, and rising almost in a frenzy of passion to leave the apartment, he suddenly stopped, put his hand to his forehead, and with a groan of agony fell senseless on the floor.

Laura's screams brought the servants to his assistance; he was instantly conveyed to bed, and the physicians, who were summoned, though they succeeded in administering temporary relief, pronounced the case to be hopeless.

Precisely at this critical moment Mrs.

Mowbray and Geraldine arrived in Florence and witnessed the melancholy scene which has already been described.

Laura could not contemplate this distressing event, and revert to its immediate cause, without terror, compunction, and remorse; but the vicinity of Mrs. Mowbray and Geraldine roused her to exertion.

She thought it possible that they might question her claims, and prepared to assert and defend them with dauntless spirit. In this she was mistaken, the legality of these claims being once admitted, all useless disputes were wisely avoided. Deeply mortified, however, by the civil contempt of Mrs. Mowbray's manner, and the silent reserve of Geraldine's, she assumed an air of haughty and insolent defiance, and after a cold and brief interview, they parted to meet no more.

CHAP. XIII.

WHEN Geraldine's first feelings of horror and distress had in some degree subsided, the sudden change which had taken place in her situation and prospects presented itself more distinctly to her mind.

Without any sordid love or undue estimation of wealth, she felt it to be a keen aggravation of the loss she had sustained. In every point of view, it was afflictive and mortifying.

The anticipation of a renewed engagement with Montague no longer excited a feeling of unmingled transport; for she was aware, that, with Mrs. Mowbray, wealth was an object of first-rate importance, and that whatever might be the disinterestedness of Montague, her want of fortune would be,

even to him, a source of disappointment. She reverted with deep regret, to the idle, and comparatively useless purposes to which the liberal allowance she had been accustomed to receive from her father, had hitherto been devoted. At the very moment when she felt it to be a duty, a privilege, to live for others rather than herself; when she was revolving a thousand benevolent schemes, the means of realising them were no longer in her power.

But amidst the depressing reflections and natural fears that crowded into her mind, amidst all the sadness and disquietude of this moment, Geraldine felt that there was still a city of refuge, in which she might take shelter. Human ties might be torn asunder by time, by accident, and death. Mortal hopes might fade and die; but there were ties, and hopes, and affections, over which time and chance had no power; which depended not upon the frail and feeble children of mortality, but upon Him, in whom there is 'no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

Whilst mourning over the loss of her earthly parent, she clung with fonder hope, and more entire confidence to the promises of a heavenly one; and the words 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' seemed to acquire a precious and peculiar force.

Mr. Maitland's kind sympathy and judicious counsel had considerably assisted in restoring Geraldine's mind to composure. He had successfully impressed upon her the conviction, that the duties of patience, resignation, and submission, though less easy and delightful than those of benevolence and joyful gratitude, were not less the appointment of that unerring hand which doeth all things well. Mrs. Mowbray had no consolation to suggest; she declared, that altogether it was a heart-breaking affair: to be metamorphosed from an heiress into nobody, was a most distressing transformation; that Mr. Maitland's reasoning and philosophy were all very fine; but Zeno the stoic, would as easily have convinced her that pain was not

an evil. Lamentations, indeed, were useless, but who could forbear to *lament*.

Geraldine could not help contrasting the rich resource furnished by christian principle in the time of adversity, with the total insufficiency of worldly wisdom. Mrs. Mowbray, whose playful wit could give additional brightness to the hour of joy, was a stranger to the art of cheering the hour of woe; she was unacquainted with that charm which can hush the perturbed spirit into peace,—with the balm which can alone soothe and quiet an aching heart.

It was refreshing to Geraldine to turn from her vain regrets to Mr. Maitland's more cheering and consoling views; and every day increased his claims to her esteem and gratitude.

To him the task of supporting her spirits, had gradually become so dear and interesting, that all other occupations appeared comparatively unimportant. He studied her looks and words with a devotedness of which he was scarcely conscious, and in

soothing the feelings and affections of her heart, forgot that he was endangering the safety of his own.

Geraldine, looking up to him as her 'guide, philosopher, and friend,' was indeed singularly attractive. Her admiration of his talents, and reverence of his principles, her artless gratitude, her unlimited confidence in his judgment, were all expressed by that gentle deference of manner so peculiarly winning to a man of pure and refined taste. Perfectly unconscious of the feelings she excited, she listened to him with the docility and earnestness of a disciple; and the powerful tie of soft dependence on one side, and protecting tenderness on the other, was insensibly formed between them.

Mrs. Mowbray, whom long acquaintance with the world and its ways, had rendered particularly skilful in detecting love through his various and multiplied disguises, was by no means dissatisfied to see him thus stealing under the form of friendship into Mr.

Maitland's heart; and, under the guise of gratitude, into that of Geraldine.

From the moment she had ascertained that her niece was no longer an heiress, it had been her incessant aim to devise some stratagem by which she might be completely detached from Montague; and the present discovery facilitated this scheme even beyond her hopes. She silenced the very few scruples of conscience which occasionally rose, by the reflection, that with Geraldine's small income and *methodistical* propensities, she was upon the whole a more suitable wife for a country curate than for a man of family and fortune; that in fact, she would be a great deal happier in such a station: for, notwithstanding all the pains that had been taken to counteract her old-fashioned notions, there was no doing the thing completely: the prejudices of early education might be checked and crushed for a season; but there was no possibility of rooting them out; they were constantly putting forth troublesome shoots. To

get rid of them entirely, defied the strength of man, and baffled the ingenuity of woman.

She contrived by various pretexts to protract their stay in Italy; planned little excursions in the neighbourhood of Florence for the benefit of Geraldine's health and spirits; was frequently attacked by convenient head-aches, which she would not allow to interfere with their plans, insisting upon confiding her niece to Mr. Maitland's care.

Thus perpetually thrown together at a time when Geraldine's spirits were in a state which naturally called forth the most soothing tenderness of manner, they became mutually dependent upon each other's society. *He* delighted to console, and *she* to be consoled. Still they were both equally unconscious of the silent progress of love.

Geraldine was not aware that she now thought as much of Mr. Maitland as of Montague; and it would have been difficult to convince Mr. Maitland that he thought of little except Geraldine. *She*, indeed, de-

tected herself in forming comparisons between her friend and her lover, — in wishing that Montague's conduct might be marked by the same stability, and regulated by the same lofty principles which distinguished Mr. Maitland's; but this was only admiration of excellence. *He* was incessantly occupied in diverting or soothing her mind; but this was only sympathy in afflictions the most trying.

CHAP. XIV.

As the winter approached, Mrs. Mowbray thought it necessary to return to England; and the weather being unfavourable for travelling, notwithstanding her aversion to the sea, she decided on embarking at Leghorn.

Mr. Maitland's watchful care and tender anxiety for Geraldine became every day more obvious; but it was not till the evening preceding that on which they landed in England, that a suspicion of the truth flashed across his own mind.

The night was clear, cold, and still; and Geraldine, wrapped in a thick cloak, and leaning upon his arm, stood upon deck, alternately contemplating the sky, brilliant with a thousand stars, and the lights gleam-

ing from the shore, which they were rapidly approaching. From some general observations on the magnificence of nature, they passed to reflections on the blessings and trials which mingle in the path of life; and Geraldine naturally reverted to the change which had taken place in her own destiny since they bade farewell to England. There was so much humility and submission in her sentiments, such a spirit of unrepining gentleness in her manner, that Mr. Maitland listened with approving delight.

"Much rather," observed he, with energy, "would I see you thus exercising and improving in every christian grace, than behold you in possession of an empire. Let us no longer lament your trials in the school of affliction, since its discipline only tends to purify, exalt, and perfect your character."

"If, indeed, it has produced such an effect," said Geraldine, "can I forget how much I am indebted to your sympathy and counsel. I might have trembled and sunk

beneath the storm, had you not pointed out the hand by which it was guided and directed."

"Oh! may that hand be your perpetual guard and shield," exclaimed Mr. Maitland, with emotion. "The moment will soon arrive when I must resign the delightful privilege I have lately enjoyed; — when I shall cease to be your constant companion.—"

"But you will never cease to be my dear and valued friend," said Geraldine. "Am I too presumptuous in hoping that your friendship is a blessing, which I shall enjoy through time and eternity?"

Mr. Maitland was silent. The glow of delight with which he listened to these words, the excessive agitation they produced, the deep regret excited by the anticipated parting, combined to reveal to him the state of his heart. He felt a sudden conviction, that little of the calmness of friendship was to be found there; and a pang of self-reproach increased the

perturbation of the moment. In a voice somewhat low and constrained, he replied,

"Yes; it is one of the peculiar privileges of a Christian to feel, that those who are united in one hope on earth will meet in heaven, to part no more. It is possible that I may never again enjoy the gratification of daily intercourse with you; but, though circumstances may separate us, your happiness will always be near my heart. I shall be constantly and warmly anxious to promote your best interests."

This was said with a degree of effort which did not escape Geraldine's attention; and she ruminated with some anxiety on the circumstances which might separate her from Mr. Maitland. It was impossible to disguise from herself, that such a separation would be extremely painful; and, for the first time, she compared her present feelings with those of which Montague had been the object. The enquiry terminated in the conviction that they were totally

dissimilar. The devoted tenderness which Montague had inspired, the delight with which she had received his vows, did not, in any degree, resemble the grateful, respectful admiration, the high esteem, which she felt for Mr. Maitland; nothing could be less like love: but if Geraldine's meditations led her to conclude that nothing could be *less* like love than her sentiments for Mr. Maitland, Mr. Maitland's reflections ended in the conviction that nothing could be *more* like love than his sentiments for Geraldine: and, with severe self-upbraidings he prepared rigidly to regulate every look and word, lest his secret should transpire. He acknowledged with a sigh, that Montague was fickle and unstable; yet, as his intimate and confidential friend, he ought, if possible, to be his advocate, — certainly not his rival. Would Geraldine's happiness be secured in a union with Montague? he felt it unsafe to discuss this question. It was not for him to decide so delicate a point; he only knew, that

henceforth, she must be as a vestal priestess in his sight, whom to love, even in idea, would be profanation.

It was well, perhaps, that this resolution was formed the night preceding that on which they reached England. Three days afterwards, having conducted them safely to Woodlands, he took his leave, and returned to his duties, his books, and his solitary fireside.

CHAP. XV.

Mrs. Mowbray, on her arrival at home, felt eager to disclose her conjectures and discoveries to her husband; to point out the superior eligibility of a union between Mr. Maitland and Geraldine; to prove that it would be little short of madness to sanction the one which had been projected with Montague; and that, in fact, it was now impracticable and impossible.

Mr. Mowbray listened to all this with the utmost calmness, simply recommending his lady to reserve her manœuvring skill till Montague's return, and informing her that letters had been received from him the preceding day.

She eagerly opened one addressed to herself, and read its contents with more perplexity than surprise. It ran thus:—

"*To Mrs. Mowbray.*

"This will be a letter of confessions, my dear mother, inspired not by the genius of candour, but by the very spirit of selfishness.

"I appeal to you, in the forlorn hope that your powers of invention, your matchless fertility in expedients, will assist in extricating me from the difficulties in which I have unhappily involved myself.

"I am at this moment in the island of Chios, inhaling the softest air beneath a cloudless sky; surrounded by all that is enchanting in nature, and yet I am the most miserable fellow breathing.

"But let me be methodical if I can. The last letter you received from me was written at Athens, and notwithstanding my mournful musings over the fallen state of Greece, I was enjoying positive happiness; my memory was busy in tracing the glories of the past; my imagination pictured their revival in days to come; my heart was full of love and Geraldine. The excitement, the delicious excitement produced by no-

velty, by the contemplation of such scenes, in such a land, was in itself enjoyment. But, alas! for me, thanks to my fate or my follies, if I catch a glimpse of happiness, the coy fugitive vanishes again in a moment.

"In my visit to Cape Colonna, I met with an Englishman quite after my own heart: he was taking a sketch of the beautiful ruins of the temple of Minerva, when I first saw him. I heard that he was an artist by profession, and, dreading to be overwhelmed by connoisseurship and technical jargon, felt little inclination to cultivate his acquaintance; but circumstances threw us together; I found him all genius, enthusiasm, and feeling; and in one short hour my prejudices vanished: the following day we were friends and fellow-travellers.

He was preparing to revisit the district of Troas, with which he was well acquainted; to ascend Mount Gargarus, and afterwards to pass a few weeks in examining the Greek-Islands. Happy to avail myself of

his experience, it was quickly decided that we should form one party.

"On our return to Athens, to my infinite surprise he introduced me to his daughter, a young girl not quite seventeen, who had accompanied him into Greece. Would to heaven he had left her with some 'aged crone!' some careful grandmother, or maiden aunt in England!

"I found, that, being employed by a nobleman of distinguished taste and liberality, and likely to remain three years in these classical regions, he could not endure so long a separation from his only child; the young lady therefore travelled with him wherever it was practicable for a lady to travel, and often ventured, where few ladies would trust themselves.

The sight of her, however, excited an emotion of surprise rather than pleasure in my mind; she was as unlike Geraldine as possible: neither tall, nor graceful, nor beautiful. With Dr. Clarke's terrific 'ac-

count fresh in my memory, I could only speculate upon what was to be done with her on mount Ida. She had not in the least the air of those heroines who contrive to ford rivers, climb precipices, and cross deserts without fear or fatigue. To my great relief, I found that she was to accompany us only to Koum-kalé, and remain there during our wanderings over this far-famed spot.

"The fortnight preceding our visit thither, I passed chiefly with Mr. Courtland (my new friend), and his daughter Matilda. Oh! that she had luckily possessed some frightful name that could not have been hitched into a rhyme, and I should have been safe.

"Our acquaintance quickly grew into intimacy; her manner towards her father was so exquisitely attentive and affectionate, that it could not be witnessed without interest and admiration. I re-examined the features over which I had so carelessly glanced, and found her dark eyes and dimpled mouth so expressive of sweetness, that

it was no longer possible to consider her an incumbrance.

"I visited several of the most interesting scenes in the neighbourhood of Athens, in her society; discovered that her taste had been highly cultivated, and that she inherited a large portion of her father's enthusiasm.

"Do not, however, fancy that my feelings towards her in any degree resembled love. As I sat by her drawing desk, contemplating the beautiful designs that grew beneath her touch, I recalled the face and figure of my own dear Geraldine, and thought them as matchless as ever; still there was something inexpressibly fascinating about this little dark-eyed girl; and in an evil hour I yielded to my poetical impulses, and wrote a few stanzas, partly inspired by the bright eyes of Matilda, and partly by the soft sky of Attica.

"Alas! the lady herself was a poet; and my unlucky stanzas produced an answer so playful and delicate, that I was again inspired.

"Our little voyage, in the most delicious weather imaginable, assisted to keep me in a rhyming vein. It was totally impossible to express in plain humble prose the rapturous feelings excited by the rising and setting of the sun in the Ægean Sea.

"Refer to the grave, learned Dr. Clarke's rich description of it, and you will easily believe, that no hand which had ever swept a tuneful lyre could be still at such a moment.

"As I contemplated these scenes with Matilda by my side, her image was so blended with them, that it was impossible in weaving my idle lay not to intermingle her name.

"I will not enter into a detail of the delights or difficulties which we experienced in our journey through the Troad. You will easily imagine, that I did not tread without emotion the plain immortalised by the deeds of heroes, and the strains of Homer.

"On our return, we were warmly welcomed by Matilda; and amidst the tender

fears she had felt for her father's safety, I perceived that some apprehensions for mine had mingled. She shuddered at the history of our perilous ascent to the summit of Gargarus; and, like Desdemona, 'gave me for my pains a world of sighs.'

"I could not but be grateful; and we got on insensibly to poetic effusions again; certainly there was not an atom of love in all this, as far as I was concerned; it was only idle, unmeaning, unjustifiable gallantry. Unfortunately, Matilda mistook it for genuine feeling and pure love, and, I am afraid in the scenes that followed, sympathy and compassion often betrayed me into a warmth of manner, and tenderness of expression, but too well calculated to foster such an idea.

"Mr. Courtland was precisely one of those persons, of whom it might be said, that the sword was too keen for the scabbard; his was 'a soul of fire,' but not 'a frame of iron.' He had suffered great fatigue in our exploring expedition, and it threw him

into a hectic fever, which, though it did not at first wear a very formidable aspect, gradually wasted his strength, and subdued his spirits.

"Nothing could exceed Matilda's tenderness, or quiet her fears; her eyes were often fixed upon her father with an expression of terror, anguish, and affection, that awakened my liveliest sympathy, and I sought only how to soothe her present sufferings, and prepare her for the trying event which I too plainly foresaw.

"In the hope that the delicious temperature of Chios might be beneficial to Mr. Courtland's health, we came hither; but even the balmy gales of this paradise of modern Greece produced but little effect on his languid frame. He declined daily, and ten days ago died in his daughter's arms.

"I was too much occupied and affected by the harrowing scene which I witnessed between Matilda and her father, to feel, till this event had taken place, all the perplexities of my own situation. Mr. Courtland

died, I believe, in the full persuasion, that Matilda would one day become my wife. By a codicil to his will, he left the arrangement of his affairs in my hands; and, except a female servant, who has lived with Matilda, from her infancy, she has no protector here, but myself. She is to be placed under the care of a distant relative, in England: of whom she knows so little, that not a single idea of home can be connected with such a residence.

"I can see that her chief, indeed, her only consolation, arises from the conviction of my attachment: from false confidence, in all that my words and looks have occasionally expressed: and what a moment would this be, to reveal the truth, to confess that I have been influenced by vanity, by momentary impulse, by pity, by compassion, by every thing but the real unaffected love which she is cherishing for me: her heart, half broken already, would sink under the shock of this discovery, and yet I have none to offer in return for hers; for I

feel that mine is more Geraldine's than ever: it is hers alone, and hers irretrievably: it will be cruelty to forsake Matilda, and misery to give up Geraldine.

"Assist me, I intreat you, by your experience and counsel: you can never quiet my self-upbraidings; I curse my folly, fifty times a day; but if you can point out any way, by which I may escape the guilt of breaking Matilda's heart, or the misery of breaking my own, for pity's sake reveal it.

"I shall embark for England, as soon as Mr. Courtland's affairs are arranged, and Matilda sufficiently well to encounter the fatigue of the voyage.

"I conjure you to let me find a letter from you at Falmouth.

"What a tale will this be for my father! What precious food for his sarcastic spirit! I suppose he will be rather puzzled to determine in which of his two general classes to place his hopeful son.

"Your affectionate,

"MONTAGUE."

CHAP. XVI.

Mrs. Mowbray, in silent thoughtfulness, folded up this letter, and passed some hours in deliberating upon the counsel it was most expedient to offer after such an appeal.

She foresaw that when its contents were communicated to Geraldine, she would renounce all idea of a union with Montague. The only remaining subject of perplexity, therefore, was his entanglement with Matilda. That he should marry such a person, decidedly a mere nobody, the daughter of an artist, was not to be thought of for a moment; but the affair required delicate management, and she rejoiced that, during his voyage, she should have leisure to ruminate over the business, and digest her plans.

A few days after the receipt of the letter, with well feigned reluctance she communicated its contents to Geraldine. Approaching her with very unusual gravity —

"I have a most painful task to perform, my dear Geraldine," said she. "After the trials you have lately sustained, I would willingly spare your heart the pang which the perusal of this letter must occasion: but to deceive you would be cruel, — unjustifiable. For your sake I must sacrifice my fondest hopes and wishes. You know how anxiously I have endeavoured to promote your union with Montague; it had indeed been long the favourite wish of my heart; judge, then, the grief I must endure, in acknowledging that there could be no longer the slightest hope of happiness in such a union. The affection, the interest, the maternal tenderness I feel for you, will not permit me to conceal that no dependence can be placed on him: it grieves me to afflict you, but read and judge."

Geraldine, alarmed by this exordium, extended her trembling hand for the letter; and with deep emotion hurried through its pages. It was, indeed, decisive; principle, prudence, and delicacy combined to determine her on an unequivocal and absolute renunciation of Montague; his professions of unabated and ardent attachment to herself, though they awakened her tenderness, had no power over her judgment; and she immediately declared her resolution to Mrs. Mowbray.

"To plead for him, my love," observed that lady, "would be unkind to you; and unavailing as it respects himself. If I contrive to relieve him from the misery of marrying a woman, whom he cannot love, it is more than he deserves: and, indeed, with all the matchless powers, for which he gives me credit, I know not how it is to be accomplished."

Geraldine could offer no counsel on such a point; but she felt herself called upon by this communication, to explain her sen-

timents to Montague; and the following letter from her, awaited him on his arrival at Falmouth.

"*To Montague Mowbray, Esq.*

"My dear Montague;

"As our correspondence has been suspended, during the last few months, the sight of my hand-writing will, perhaps, occasion you some surprise.

"I once indeed indulged the hope, that this correspondence would have been renewed under very different, and far happier auspices: but the hope has vanished, and the day I trust will come, when I shall cease to lament that it was delusive.

"You have too much candour to regret, that I have been made acquainted with the peculiar circumstances in which you are at present placed: nor can you wonder, that I should intreat you to dismiss for ever from your mind, all idea of a renewal of our engagement.

" I would not for the world, add a single reproach to those you are now enduring. You were privileged to use as you pleased, the freedom which I restored. To me, you owe no apology, for you have committed no offence; nor should I have deemed it necessary to be thus explicit, had not your letter contained some allusions, which convinced me that you had not abandoned the idea, of our ultimate reunion.

" Let me earnestly intreat you, not for a moment, to allow such a hope to interfere with any arrangements which a sense of justice, feeling, and honour, may induce you to make. It would be cruel, self-condemned as you are, to add to your misery by a single word of unkindness; and you may feel assured that neither complaint nor censure will ever escape me.

" But whilst I entirely exonerate you with respect to myself, I cannot disguise the deep and unaffected sympathy which I feel for Miss Courtland. The anguish

which the heart endures, when it first awakens from its dream of love and confidence, she will too soon experience. That beam of joy which could pierce even affliction's darkest cloud, will become increasingly dim; and heavy indeed will be the gloom by which she is encompassed.

"Before you set sail for England a detail of the very painful trials which I have lately sustained, most probably reached you. I will not now dwell upon them; for I am unwilling to rekindle that sincere and affectionate sympathy, which I am persuaded you immediately felt for me.

"One circumstance in these trials, assists in reconciling me to our separation. Had I inherited the brilliant fortune to which I once looked forward; with what reluctance should I have relinquished the hope of bestowing it upon you. Perhaps in such a case I might have found it impossible, to resist the pleadings of my heart: let me therefore be thankful that I am spared this temptation.

"In the humble and obscure station which I am probably destined to fill, I shall sometimes look back to the past, as to a deceitful dream: but if regret occasionally mingles in these retrospections, it will be checked by the recollection, that my lot, whether splendid or lowly, is not regulated by the caprice of chance, but by the hand of unerring wisdom.

"Forgive me, Montague, if, in the last letter which I shall ever address to you, I feel inclined to be serious; if in lamenting the heart-aches you feel and inflict, I venture to suggest that there is but one corrective sufficiently powerful to regulate the impetuosity of your feelings. Formed as you are to enjoy and communicate happiness, how is it that you are constantly inflicting and enduring so much positive wretchedness? You will say, perhaps, that some strange fatality is at work: but the fatality is of your own creation.

"When I look to the detached parts of your character, how much that is attractive

does it appear to possess. The sobriety of Christian principle can alone give to it, as a whole, the harmony and proportion in which it is unfortunately deficient: any guide, less active and authoritative, will be insufficient. Has a nice sense of honour, which is often considered as a substitute, prevented your being betrayed into conduct which you acknowledge to be indefensible? — Unfortunately it serves only to quicken the keenness of your self-reproaches.

"Do not, I conjure you, be offended either by my candour or my seriousness. It is on 'the gem only that we are disturbed to see the dust; the pebble may be soiled and we do not heed it.'

"It is painful to me to urge one point on which I am anxious to be clearly understood:— let me entreat you, my dear Montague, to consider the decision expressed in this letter as final and absolute.

"Though my heart can never be entirely estranged from yours, though the senti-

ments which have grown with my growth, can never be exchanged for the coldness of indifference, yet my resolution is unalterable.

"Do not, therefore, afflict me by remonstrances, which will be at once distressing and fruitless.

"Let me bid you farewell, with the hope that resentment, on your part, will not destroy the tie of friendship by which we may still be united: that you will accept my warmest wishes for your happiness, and the assurance that I shall be ever

"Your sincerely attached friend,

"GERALDINE."

This letter was inclosed in one of a very different character from Mrs. Mowbray.

"*To Montague Mowbray, Esq.*

"My dear Montague;

"If I understood the art of manœuvring as well as Ulysses, or possessed the patience

of Job himself, you would exhaust the one and baffle the other.

"I have considered and re-considered your most provoking history, and can only come to the homely conclusion, that we must make the best of a bad business.

"As to your father, not a word of advice does he deign to give; he is in one of his invulnerable, impenetrable moods: all silence and solemnity.

"Of course, Geraldine makes her parting courtesy to you; and, I am sorry to say, that it will be a far more graceful and proper one than your parting bow to poor Miss Courtland; but, whether graceful or not, it must be made. It would be too cruel, in addition to the misery she has already endured, to inflict upon her the incurable evil of marriage, with a man whose heart is not only indifferent, but pre-occupied; and who, notwithstanding her *dark eyes* and *dimpled mouth*, would wish her at Jericho before the honey-moon was over.

"Though I have not, in general, much sympathy with love-lorn maidens, I really feel some pity for this poor girl; and have too much charity not to preserve her from so deplorable a lot. You must gradually prepare her mind for the cruel truth. As to a broken heart; the term, it must be confessed, has a terrific sound, but it means no more, in the vocabulary of lovers, than '*fee, faw, fum*' in the vocabulary of children. Hearts may ache, but they do not break in these days, at least, not for love. Perhaps, upon re-consideration, it may be better to reveal the truth at once; the pang will be sharper, but then it will be more quickly over. You must be governed, however, by the actual state of her health and spirits. I wish, with all my heart, she may be one of those tender young ladies who declare 'love to be a want of their souls:' and if we may judge from the facility with which she yielded her heart, on the very first attack, this is likely enough to be the case. Really you may say with Cæsar 'I came, I

saw, I conquered.' However, I am not without hope that she will soon find consolation in playing the part of Amaryllis, to some other Corydon.

"The best advice I can give you, is to lay aside, for the present, all thoughts of love and marriage; ten years hence, you may perhaps have learned to resist the artillery of bright eyes and soft smiles; and in the interim, you had better exchange the worship of the Muses for the study of the law; shut yourself up in chambers, and try if an acquaintance with

> Horse-pleas, traverses, demurrers,
> Jeofails, imparlances, and errours—
> Averments, bars, and protestandoes

will have as charming an effect upon your mind as it had upon 'Lord Glenthorn's:' possibly, it may discipline your imagination, and help to counteract your unfortunate talent for writing sonnets and ensnaring hearts. Adieu.

"Sincerely yours,

"GEORGIANA MOWBRAY."

CHAP. XVII.

About the time when Montague's arrival in England might be calculated upon, these letters were forwarded; and, as Geraldine was desirous of avoiding an immediate interview with him, she accepted an invitation to Wentworth Hall.

Of Mr. Maitland she had seen little since their return to Woodlands. He had called but once there to offer his compliments and enquiries; and even when they met at the vicarage, their interviews had been brief and hurried.

He professed to be intent upon the study of Hebrew, in which he had just discovered that he was lamentably deficient.

By Mr. Fullarton, Geraldine had been received as an adopted daughter; and his

kind assurances of protection, and solicitude to promote and secure her happiness, excited in her heart a glow of grateful affection, little inferior to that of filial love. Without entering into a minute explanation, she acquainted him with her final separation from Montague, and her proposed visit at Wentworth Hall.

Mr. Wentworth welcomed her with more than his usual hospitality; and drawing her aside a few days after her arrival, enquired whether there was any truth in the report that the match between Montague and herself was broken off. Upon Geraldine's answering in the affirmative:

"You may tell him, then, my dear, from me," said he, "that I don't care if I never see him again. If he belonged to me I should be ashamed of him. Pray, what does my friend Mowbray say to it all? I had a better opinion of him than to believe that he would sanction such paltry pitiful doings. I have this to say, my dear," continued he, after a short pause, "that if you

were inclined to like either of my boys, I would give my consent as heartily as if you were mistress of the best estate in the kingdom.

Geraldine immediately exculpated Montague, from the charge of being influenced by mercenary motives, and endeavoured to explain, that the separation originated with herself.

"If you did not know your own mind, my dear, that is another thing," said Mr. Wentworth; "but it is an ugly business altogether; I don't like the look of it."

Geraldine knew not how to make the truth intelligible to him; and she continued silent and embarrassed.

"I don't wish to hear your secrets, my dear," said he; "but if Montague likes you, and you like him; what is the meaning of these ons and offs — these marriages, and no marriages."

Geraldine stammered out something about the impossibility of explanation.

"Oh! if it is only a lovers' quarrel,"

continued he, " I have nothing more to say. It will all be made up again, I dare say; only the sooner the better, in my opinion."

Desirous of rectifying the mistake, she again attempted an explanation, but it served only to make 'confusion worse confounded,' and Mr. Wentworth at length left the room, exclaiming, —

" I believe the deuce is in all the young girls now a-days. They don't know their own minds about any thing."

Geraldine found Mr. Wentworth's family in a still more divided state than formerly.

The discord between Mr. Latimer and Miss Wentworth, had reached its highest point. Miss Wentworth inveighed against Mr. Latimer's preaching, both publicly and privately, and he avenged himself by railing against her temper, with equal perseverance. Mr. Latimer, piqued by some observations she had made, studied controversial divinity for the *laudable* purpose of opposing her opinions; and after an argu-

ment, carried on with more than usual asperity, the lady declared that she would never more listen to the public teaching of a man, whose principles and judgment, were equally defective.

After this declaration, she renounced all attendance at church; and soon discovered a substitute for Mr. Latimer, in a pastor of very different character.

In a small town about three miles from Wentworth Hall, a chapel had been recently erected; and the fame of its officiating minister soon travelled to Miss Wentworth.

He was not one of that upright and conscientious class, who, if we are not fortunate enough to number them among the friends of the church, are still the champions of Christianity; the friends of pure and undefiled religion, to whom we may with pleasure extend the right hand of fellowship; but a self-constituted ignorant teacher; metamorphosed from an un-

washed artificer,' into a minister of the Gospel of Christ. With unhallowed and unprepared hand, he ventured to touch the holy ark; and as 'fools rush in, where angels fear to tread,' to expound 'the deep,' and reveal the hidden things of God; mistaking fluency for eloquence, and presumption for inspiration, he poured forth his Antinomian exposition of Christianity, with the zeal and authority of an apostle. Hearers flocked around him, and they were rapidly transformed into converts. His doctrines were too gratifying to the pride, and too soothing to the indolence of human nature, not to be acceptable. To obtain pardon for sin, without repenting, or forsaking it, and heaven without holiness, were terms too easy and agreeable, not to be eagerly embraced.

Miss Wentworth was at first rather startled, at the bold and unqualified style in which his opinions were delivered; but the transition, from *her* view of Christianity

to *his*, was by no means difficult: the land-mark was removed with facility, the line of separation easily effaced.

She satisfied herself with remarking, that his view of the privileges of Christianity, was more enlarged than hers; and without the slightest wish on her part to indulge in sin, she sanctioned and supported an interpretation of Scripture, equally fatal to moral purity and spiritual progress.

Mr. Wentworth repeatedly expostulated with his daughter on her secession from the church, and proposed (as her dislike to Mr. Latimer was insurmountable) that she should attend the ministry of Mr. Fullarton; but she was, as usual, perfectly unpersuadable. She acknowledged that Mr. Fullarton and his curate were very respectable men, and very orthodox preachers; but they were too *legal* to please her.

Mr. Wentworth could not argue with his daughter; he could only feel and lament the ill effects of her example. Half his servants, and many of his tenants, won by

the charm of novelty, and influenced by this example, crowded to the chapel; and the schism in the neighbourhood rapidly extended.

Mr. Latimer remonstrated. Miss Wentworth persisted. *She* distributed tracts and catechisms through the parish, which *he* denounced as heretical and pernicious. The poor, in whose hands they were placed, could not judge very nicely upon this point; but they perceived that the lady and gentleman had an inveterate hatred to each other, and this conviction was not very likely to foster a spirit of Christian love.

Mrs. Wentworth alone remained tranquil and passive. She merely remarked, that the path to the chapel was dirty in the winter, and exposed in the summer.

Helen, disgusted with her sister's new favourite, dissatisfied with Mr. Latimer, and still more with herself, again yielded to depression and despondency.

Edmund had been partially successful in his attempts to relieve and divert her

mind; but he was not sufficiently acquainted with the nature of the malady to prescribe an effectual remedy; the root of the evil remained: his was a palliative, but not a cure.

Every visit he paid at Wentworth Hall unfortunately strengthened his prejudices against earnest piety. Finding *home* not what the poet has so sweetly pictured it,—

> The seat of love, of joy, of tenderness,
> Where polished friends, and dear relations,
> Mingle into bliss;

but the very abode of gloom and discord, he adopted the false and pernicious notion, that earnestness in religion destroys the ease and charm of social intercourse, chills the glow of feeling, and checks the play of intellect; and returned with redoubled eagerness to companions who had more wit than piety, and more gaiety than wisdom.

Geraldine had now learned to discriminate; and while she lamented the false impressions thus produced, was no longer in danger of sharing them.

She had been taught to cultivate humility, to exercise watchfulness, to aim at consistency; not to talk of her sins and imperfections, but to combat them. But as she adopted no peculiar phrases, was silent when controversial points were discussed, and practised the duties of Christianity more than she talked of them, Miss Wentworth classed her among the lukewarm and indifferent.

The modest firmness with which she repelled this charge, and avowed her love and reverence of religion, won the admiration of the timid but candid Helen; and the gentleness of her manner invited confidence.

They read and conversed together; and Geraldine succeeded in some degree, in calming her mind, and stimulating her to active exertion.

The plain and simple instructions she had received, were communicated to Helen; and upon any difficult point, she referred

her to the friend to whose wise counsel she herself was so much indebted.

This occupation gave an interest to her visit, which it would not otherwise have possessed; and in soothing and fortifying the mind of Helen, her own became insensibly strengthened and improved.

CHAP. XVIII.

This tranquillity was interrupted by the receipt of a billet from Montague, announcing his arrival at Woodlands, and requesting, or rather demanding, an interview.

From the moment the intelligence of Geraldine's loss of fortune had reached him his mind had been in a state of irritation, almost amounting to frenzy. The claims of Matilda appeared light as air compared with those of Geraldine; every generous and delicate feeling of his nature was roused into action; every fond and tender sentiment revived. To resign her at such a moment would be base and disgraceful, destructive of his happiness, and fatal to his reputation as a man of honour.

Perpetually harassed by these reflections, his manner towards Matilda became un-

equal and embarrassed; still he had not courage, in the present state of her spirits, to reveal the truth.

During their voyage he passed hour after hour in silent misery, pondering over his own perplexing situation; distracted between pity for Matilda, love for Geraldine, and detestation of his own folly.

Though from the uncertainty of Montague's manner, a secret dread of his inconstancy had sometimes stolen over the heart of Matilda, she instantly repelled it, as a cruel injustice to him, whom her youthful fancy had invested with full perfection. With generous confidence she awaited the moment when he should impart to her the source of his grief; and regretted his silence and abstraction, chiefly because it prevented her disclosing all the sympathy and tenderness with which her heart was overflowing.

That circumstances might retard, and his family oppose their union, she could easily imagine; but that Montague should

not be the very soul of honour, she would not, for an instant, believe.

Little prepared for the impending blow, her heart beat high with hope as she approached the shores of England; and while memory recalled the kind and tender protector, of whom death had deprived her, the soothing conviction that she still possessed one with whom, in a closer tie, and more endearing intimacy, she should pass many a year of peace and joy, shed so bright a beam over the future, that the gloom of the past was forgotten.

The relation, to whose care she was to be consigned, resided about thirty miles from Falmouth; and, on their arrival there, they prepared to proceed immediately to her destined home.

Montague instantly dispatched a messenger for letters, and tearing the packet open the moment it arrived, read them in a tumult of agitation, which alarmed Matilda.

Geraldine's gentle but decided rejection,

her sympathy for Matilda, the generosity with which she had abstained from a single word of upbraiding, at once stimulated the reproaches of his conscience and quickened the tenderness of his feelings.

The coolness of Mrs. Mowbray, in speaking of this separation, irritated him past endurance. It was not difficult to discover that if she had no hope, she had also no wish, that the connection should take place; and his generous feelings revolted from the idea of meanness so degrading.

In a moment of uncontrollable emotion, he confessed the sad truth to Matilda; sought neither to conceal nor excuse the imprudence and cruelty of his conduct, implored her pardon, and threw himself upon her generosity. He felt that though not bound to her, by the formal tie of prose and parchment, he had pledged himself again and again, by the more seductive one of looks,—by 'thoughts that breathe, and words that burn;' and, too candid to take refuge in evasion and subterfuge, his self-

condemnation was as vehement as it was sincere.

Matilda listened, and

> ——— Looked like one that would deny,
> That such a thing could be beneath the sky.'

The blush of shame which for a moment diffused itself over her countenance, quickly faded; and the conflicting feelings of love and despair gave it an expression that pierced the heart of Montague. His self-reproaches became still more violent; but Matilda heard as though she heard him not. Years of enjoyment could scarcely balance the exquisite pain of such a moment. Every fond hope in an instant crushed, the sensitive delicacy of womanly feeling deeply wounded, she continued silent and motionless, believing that the world did not contain so wretched a being as herself.

Montague dared not attempt to soothe or console her; he could neither disguise nor retract the fatal truth, that another was preferred to her; but so powerfully was he affected by her despair, that he offered to

live for her, and her alone. Still she neither spoke nor moved; and when the carriage was announced, seemed to have forgotten for what purpose it had been ordered. She shuddered, as Montague placed her in it; and throwing herself back, and hiding her face with both hands, tears of agony flowed down her cheeks.

Their journey was performed nearly in silence. Montague could only reiterate his unavailing self-reproaches, and lament the impetuosity which had betrayed him into revealing the truth at such a time.

Heart-broken as Matilda now was, he must commit her to the hands of strangers, who would neither understand nor care for her feelings, and from whom she could expect neither affection nor sympathy.

As they drew near the close of their journey, he ventured to intreat that he might be permitted to enquire after her on the following day, vehemently declaring that he would never quit the neighbourhood, till he could leave her tranquil and composed.

The next morning before it was practicable to call at the house of a stranger, he received the following note from Matilda:—

"I earnestly entreat you to spare me the pain of an interview. I cannot acquit, and I will not condemn you; let me rather bewail my own vanity—my own credulity; but I knew nothing of human nature; I had been educated by the most generous, the most honourable of men, and I thought the whole world resembled him. I sincerely wish you happy; and to prove this sincerity, I promise to neglect no means of preserving my health, and regaining the peace I have lost. Farewell; this is probably the last communication we shall have; let me therefore assure you, that I think of you without resentment, and let us both hope, that the day will come when I shall learn to think of you without pain.

"MATILDA COURTLAND."

Montague read this note with considerable emotion, and again muttered imprecations on himself; but amidst all his pity

for Matilda, he felt secretly relieved by the conviction that the business was now over. He recalled all that he had heard on the subject of hopeless attachments, and the utter impossibility of their duration; and at length succeeded in persuading himself, that after the first burst of grief had subsided, Matilda would gradually recover composure, and ultimately be restored to happiness. Dismissing the subject, therefore, as speedily as possible from his mind, he rapidly pursued his journey towards Woodlands, and on his way thither had in idea combated every obstacle, reasoned away every argument, and vanquished all opposition that might be offered to the renewal and fulfilment of his engagement with Geraldine.

Again he read her letter; and notwithstanding the calm and decided rejection it contained, flattered himself that she could not resist his pleadings; that she must be touched by his disinterestedness, and affected by his deep and unfeigned repentance.

CHAP. XIX.

His disappointment was keen, when, upon arriving at Woodlands, he found Geraldine absent: and this disappointment was aggravated by the coolness with which Mrs. Mowbray listened to his regrets and lamentations, and by her positive assurances, that any application to Geraldine would be fruitless.

Roused nearly to fury, he accused her of the most paltry feelings and mercenary views, vowed that Geraldine was ten thousand times dearer to him than ever, and that he would move heaven and earth, to recover her.

In this spirit, he dictated the note which was forwarded to Wentworth Hall; and, to prevent the possibility of a refusal, pre-

sented himself there, ten minutes after it had been delivered.

Nothing could be more trying than the interview that followed. Montague pleaded with all the eloquence of love, all the earnestness of sincerity, all the vehemence of passion. Never had he displayed a tenderness so devoted, a disinterestedness so perfect, a candour so winning. Geraldine's heart was deeply touched, but she continued firm: even the present vehemence of Montague's manner, — the unrepressed ardour of his feelings, convinced her that he was a stranger to all self-command; his vows, his protestations, his regrets, sincere as they were, would again be forgotten. He was still unchanged — still the same ardent, engaging, impetuous being, governed only by feelings as mutable as they were intense. Whilst he hung over her with indescribable fondness; alternately assailing her with soft reproaches and breathing vows of constancy and love, Geraldine's

courage nearly failed; but the image of Matilda pining away her hours in loneliness and misery, presented itself; and the charm was dissolved.

When Montague perceived that his tender pleadings were ineffectual, that her resolution was inflexible, he became irritated by opposition; and accusing her of heartless and deliberate cruelty, passed from an extreme of tenderness to an expression of the fiercest displeasure.

But it was far more easy to repel accusation, than to resist entreaty; and he soon discovered that the resolution which tenderness could not subdue, injustice would but confirm. Again he had recourse to earnest supplications, and finding them unavailing, abruptly left the house in a state of irritation little short of madness.

Geraldine had suffered nearly as much as himself during the interview; but in the solitude of her chamber, when she reviewed her own conduct, judgment confirmed her

decision. The meed of self-approbation was hers, yet her heart ached with the conflict.

The sight of Montague had revived feelings which had lately been quiescent: the soft whispers of love had sounded sweetly; and the idea that she had listened to them for the last time, was painful and depressing; but she felt that a husband should be something more than a passionate admirer, or even than an engaging companion: that he should be the friend in whom she could entirely confide; the guide whom she could delightedly follow; the Christian, with whom she could hope and rejoice. Alas! how remote from such a character was Montague. Capricious as he had been as a lover, could he, as a husband, inspire her with that fearless confidence in his faith and truth, which is at once the charm of married life, and the chief security for its happiness.

Whilst Geraldine was occupied in these pensive reflections Montague had been

galloping furiously towards Woodlands. Having reached the park-gate he slackened his pace, feeling reluctant to meet the triumphant glance of Mrs. Mowbray, upon this accomplishment of her predictions. To whom could he look for comfort? In whom could he place confidence? He recollected his tried friend Maitland, and dismounting, gave his horse to his servant, and walked rapidly on to the cottage in which he lived.

Mr. Maitland received him with the warmest kindness.

" Had I known of your arrival at Woodlands," said he, " I should have been too eager to congratulate and welcome you to have waited for this kind visit."

" Congratulate and welcome me!" exclaimed Montague; " oh! use not such words to a being so miserable, so wretched as myself; they are but mockery."

" Wretched and miserable!" echoed Mr. Maitland, in great amazement, " to

what do you allude? What can have happened?"

"Enough has happened to make me hate myself in the first place, and hang myself in the second," exclaimed Montague, with great vehemence.

"No, no," said Mr. Maitland, "I will not believe you; the mischief, whatever it may be, is not, I hope, irreparable."

"It is irreparable, utterly irreparable," repeated Montague; "and I am a wretch for life: a forlorn rejected wretch."

Mr. Maitland requested an explanation.

"I did not write a history of my follies to you," said Montague; "but you will have no great difficulty in believing me, when I confess that I have been a fool,—a vain, selfish, cruel fool."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Maitland, "I have great difficulty in believing it."

"Half in sport, — half in earnest," continued Montague, "I wrote soft nonsense to a pretty girl, who was silly enough

to mistake it for truth and sense; and because I was so unlucky as to win *her* heart, Geraldine has cruelly resolved upon breaking mine."

"And how and when did all this happen?" enquired Mr. Maitland.

"Ask me no questions," replied Montague, impatiently; "I can only repeat, that, thanks to my own folly, and the heartless cruelty of Geraldine, I am the most miserable fellow breathing."

"Be less unjust, Montague," said Mr. Maitland; "do not mistake firmness for cruelty."

"It is cruelty, the most barbarous cruelty. She knows, she sees the pangs I suffer; she feels her power; she is conscious that I love her to distraction,—that my repentance is sincere, poignant, bitter; and yet she persists in her refusal—her inhuman refusal."

"And do you believe, Montague, that it has cost her no effort to decide against you? With what tenderness did she love?

With what patience did she bear with you? With how warm and fond a hope did she await your return? Depend upon it, you are not the only sufferer."

"No, no," exclaimed Montague, "she does not, cannot suffer, or she could not be thus firm, thus resolute; but if you have any pity, any compassion for your unhappy friend, plead my cause with her; she respects your judgment, she will listen to your arguments."

Mr. Maitland changed colour — "What could I urge that would be at all effectual?" said he, rising and walking up and down the room as he spoke; "her acceptance or rejection depended upon yourself. What can I say to inspire her with confidence? How could I plead against my conscience, against my convictions?"

"Are you too my enemy?" said Montague, looking at him fiercely.

"No; I am your faithful friend," replied Mr. Maitland, "and would sacrifice any thing but my truth and honesty to

prove my friendship; but I am also," he added, in a lower tone, "the faithful friend of Miss Beresford; and can I, in honour, urge her to a union in which I fear her happiness would be the sacrifice?"

Montague fixed his eyes on Mr. Maitland's countenance, and was struck with the agitation it expressed.

"Is it your low opinion of me, or your high opinion of Geraldine," said he, in a tone of bitterness, "that makes you thus lukewarm in my cause?"

"My opinion of you," returned Mr. Maitland, with spirit, "varies with your varying conduct. My opinion of Miss Beresford is fixed and permanent. Her principles are as high as her conduct is admirable."

"You speak with enthusiasm," said Montague, in a tone of smothered passion.

"And with sincerity," added Mr. Maitland, calmly.

"I should be sorry," continued Montague, in the same accent of suppressed

rage, "to do you injustice; but such warm, such enthusiastic admiration in so young a man, is somewhat suspicious."

Mr. Maitland's countenance again betrayed extreme agitation.

"By heaven!" exclaimed Montague, "my suspicions are just; deny them, if you can."

"Deny what?" said Mr. Maitland, with a strong effort to speak calmly.

"Deny that you love her. Deny that you are my rival," continued, Montague, furiously.

"Be less violent — less peremptory, Montague," said Mr. Maitland, "if you expect an answer from me."

"Practise no subterfuge, no evasion, Sir," said Montague, with increasing fury; "the most consummate hypocrisy will now avail you nothing."

Skilled as Mr. Maitland was in the science of self-government, he could not listen, without keen emotion, to language such as this. A crimson flush covered his face, as he exclaimed, —

"Leave me, Sir, I conjure you. Insult me no longer, lest I forget what is due to you and to myself."

"Disprove my accusations; say that you do not love her, and I will sue like a slave for your pardon," said Montague.

Mr. Maitland was again silent for a few moments.

"I will not forfeit my integrity," said he; "I cannot deny that I love her, but—"

"No more, Sir," exclaimed Montague; "you have said enough. This stroke is, indeed, too much," added he.—"You, whom I trusted, whose principles I venerated, whose honour I believed to be bright as the sun.—To be thus meanly, thus cruelly deceived, where I had 'garnered up my heart.'"

"Stop, Montague, and listen to me," exclaimed Mr Maitland.

But Montague would not stop; he would not listen: abruptly leaving the room, he rushed from the house in an agitation which Mr. Maitland could not behold without pity.

CHAP. XX.

MONTAGUE had scarcely been gone an hour when a note was brought to Mr. Maitland containing these words: —

" *To the Rev. C. Maitland.*

" Do not flatter yourself that your profession will protect you from my just revenge. If you are not as cowardly as you are treacherous, make the only reparation now in your power, by giving me the satisfaction of a gentleman."

To this note the following reply was sent by Mr. Maitland.

" *To Montague Mowbray, Esq.*

" You have distrusted my integrity, insulted me by suspicion, outraged my feel-

ings; but my principles you cannot shake: they are founded upon a rock. The temporary irritation excited by your violence has already subsided, and I feel inclined only to pity you. A man of the world perhaps would think that he acted magnanimously in expressing merely cool contempt for such conduct; but a Christian acknowledges a higher principle, and his heart pities what his judgment must condemn.

"To a mind like yours the feelings of to-morrow will be sufficient punishment, and to that punishment alone I leave you.

"Neither threats nor violence will, for a moment, induce me to disguise the truth. I acknowledge that I love Geraldine as fervently as you can do; but this is my only sin against you. Of any other offence I am guiltless.

"She is entirely unconscious of my preference; nor have I, for a moment, forgotten the priority of your claims. Ten thousand times rather would I exile myself for ever from her sight, than forfeit that

nicety of principle which is dear to me as a man of honour, still dearer to me as a Christian.

"The trying and peculiar circumstances in which Geraldine was placed at Florence, excited my warmest sympathy, and the task of consoling and soothing a young and beautiful woman is not without danger.

"I believe my heart would have been proof against her attractive loveliness, had that been her sole charm; but it was not proof against that union of lofty principle and feminine gentleness, which I had daily opportunities of witnessing.

"From the moment I became conscious of this truth I practised the most rigid self-denial. You, who know what it is to love, and to love so matchless a being, are capable of estimating the sacrifice I made.

"I immediately estranged myself from her society, stifled every tender feeling, and incurred the imputation of treating her with negligence and caprice.

"Prudence, indeed, would have pre-

scribed this course of conduct; for, alas! I have no offering to make to Geraldine but that of a fond and faithful heart. I might, perhaps, have disregarded these cold and cautious whispers, had not your claims interfered; they could not, for an instant, be forgotten. Rather would I submit to the severest sacrifice, than incur what a conscientious spirit feels most keenly — ' its own rebuke.'

" If I am not mistaken in your character, you will retract the injurious language which, in the madness of the moment, you permitted to escape you; but should you still continue to load me with obloquy, and to indulge a spirit of hatred and revenge, think not that I shall so far sully my own character, and disgrace the principles I profess, as to adopt the miserable expedient which you have proposed. Even, if my profession presented not an insurmountable obstacle, my decision would be precisely the same.

" There is no crime in the whole cata-

logue of fashionable vices, which I hold in deeper abhorrence. Think you, that I would offer at the shrine of so worthless an idol as *false honour*, the costly sacrifice of an immortal soul; that I would sanction a custom which reason condemns, which religion forbids; that the last act of my life should be one of impious defiance against the positive law of God.

" No, Montague: he must be a Christian in *name* alone, who can commit a sin thus glaring, thus inexpiable. To him, who is a Christian *in deed* and *in truth*, life appears no poor and paltry gift, to be rashly hazarded, or cast away with ungrateful and unfeeling levity. As connected with his eternal destiny, it is to him a term of immense and infinite value. His heart is filled with deep reverence, with boundless gratitude, to that God in whom he lives and moves, and has his being; nor can he, for a single moment, weigh the contempt of man against the authority of

that eternal and immutable Judge, compared to whose awful frown 'the concentrated attention of all the beings in the universe would be powerless as the gaze of an infant.'

"Farewell! If you think my forgiveness worth accepting, I freely give it you: and that many years of peace and virtue may be yet in store for you, is the prayer of

"Your sincere friend,

"CHARLES MAITLAND."

CHAP. XXI.

MONTAGUE, on his return to Woodlands, found temporary relief in pouring forth his new tale of grievances to Mrs. Mowbray.

Geraldine's rejection did not appear quite so humiliating, now that he suspected Mr. Maitland of 'treasons, stratagems, and plots;' and his sense of disappointment became less keen than his desire of avenging himself on this false friend.

Mrs. Mowbray waited till he had exhausted his fury by abusing Mr. Maitland in every possible variety of term; and then coolly observed, that she had suspected the fact for some time; and that, far from participating the feelings of Montague, she thought nothing could be more suitable than the connection to which this love

would probably lead. There was a striking similarity in the habits, tastes, and principles of the parties; and though Geraldine was spoiled by her *methodistical notions* for a woman of fashion, she would make a paragon of a wife for a country parson; she would be quite in her element when instructing a group of ragged children, and making baby clothes and caudle for their mothers. Certainly it was mortifying to see her becoming such a mere nobody, after the advantages she had enjoyed, and the superior class into which she had been introduced; but she had decidedly, no taste for an elevated sphere, and, therefore, it was much the wisest plan to leave her quietly to fill one in which 'her virtues might walk their narrow round.'

Montague, unconvinced by this reasoning, and highly irritated by his mother's total want of sympathy, would listen no longer; and appealing to his father, begged to know his opinion of Mr. Maitland's *abominable conduct.*

Mr. Mowbray sarcastically replied, that as Montague had exercised his privilege of falling in love as often as he pleased, he could not reasonably complain of Mr. Maitland's availing himself of the same privilege; and he begged to suggest, that instead of talking thus fluently of what was *honourable*, it would be better if he would learn to practise it.

Montague, wounded to the quick, left the room muttering something about stocks and stones, and hearts of marble; and shut himself up in his chamber, impatiently awaiting Mr. Maitland's reply.

It arrived, and produced an instantaneous revolution in the ever-fluctuating feelings of Montague. Mr. Maitland was rapidly transformed from a dæmon to a divinity, and he soon felt inclined to worship the man whom, a few minutes before, he had loaded with opprobrium. He acknowledged, that Mr. Maitland had acted the most honourable part; and, comparing his own impetuous and defective character,

with the unblemished integrity and undeviating excellence of his friend, felt humbled and wretched at the contrast.

He meditated all night over this letter; and passing, as usual, from one extreme to another, reasoned himself into the conviction, that Mr. Maitland alone was worthy of Geraldine; and to prove that he was not entirely undeserving of the friendship of such a man, resolved to be magnanimous, to resign his pretensions, and not only to leave the field open to his faultless rival, but, if possible, to surmount the obstacles which prudence opposed to the accomplishment of his secret wishes.

To prove the sincerity of this determination, and to prevent the possibility of his receding from it, he immediately wrote to Matilda, urging her once more to receive him in the character of a lover; but though Montague, when inspired by his mischievous muse, could play the lover with astonishing facility, he could not, in plain prose, feign an ardour which he did

not feel; and his letter to Matilda, though couched in terms intended to be persuasive, betrayed too much of the real state of his heart to produce the desired effect.

She disdained to be indebted to compassion for the hand which she had fondly hoped would have been the offering of love; and though he had plainly stated that his engagement with Geraldine was at an end for ever, refused his overtures in terms the most unequivocal.

Reconciled in some degree to himself by having made this offer, and by the generous determination he had formed, his heart was inexpressibly lightened; and the desire of making a noble reparation to Mr. Maitland soon filled and occupied his mind nearly to the exclusion of every other subject. His active imagination was continually at work. Bishopricks, deaneries, and prebends, had they been in his gift, would have been lavishly heaped upon him at that moment.

Alas! he had not even a living to offer.

The presentation to that of Hartley, would indeed be his on some future day, but that day was probably far distant.

In the present state of his mind, however, difficulties the most discouraging, obstacles the most formidable, appeared slight to Montague; or rather served to stimulate him to action. It would, indeed, afford him a species of consolation, to grapple with and conquer them. It would be luxury to exert every energy of body and mind in the service of the friend whom he had injured.

He resolved upon an immediate visit to Richmond, that he might consult Mr. Spenser on the occasion, and interest him in the promotion of his schemes.

After fully recanting, in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray, all that he had uttered in the vehemence of his wrath, he sent the following notes to Geraldine and Mr. Maitland, and immediately commenced his journey to Richmond.

" *To the Rev. C. Maitland.*

" You are generous enough to offer me your forgiveness, but can I ever be reconciled to myself, or cease to remember, with the bitterest anguish, my unjustifiable conduct towards you?

" I am sure that you will accept this acknowledgement as a feeble though insufficient atonement; but I feel that I have forfeited all claim to your good opinion, nor can I ever recover my own, till I have proved myself less unworthy the title of your faithful friend,

" MONTAGUE MOWBRAY."

" *To Miss Beresford.*

" I will no longer attempt to combat your resolution, my dearest Geraldine; you shall never again be distressed by the violence, or persecuted by the claims of him whom you so justly rejected.

" Forgive, if you can, the pain I have so frequently occasioned you; but why should I for a moment doubt it? Your

heart is too full of gentleness and charity to harbour the emotion of anger, even against an enemy; much less would you cherish it towards an erring being, whom you once honoured with your preference, once blessed with your tenderness.

"Let me not revert to that happy period of my life, lest I should find my courage fail, and again madly refuse to relinquish you. I was unworthy such bliss: it is fit that it should be reserved for unequalled excellence and unsullied worth.

"I acknowledge the justice of your decision, and bid you farewell, not with murmurs, but with blessings.

"To promote, or to witness your happiness, will now be the consolation and privilege of him, who, in resigning his fondest hope, still cherishes that of being numbered with your most affectionate and faithful friends.

"MONTAGUE MOWBRAY."

CHAP. XXII.

MONTAGUE pursued his journey to Richmond with as much rapidity as if the possession of an empire had depended upon his reaching it at a given moment.

The sacrifice he had just made ennobled him in his own eyes. To have bowed to authority, to have yielded to necessity, would have been humiliating; but to be a martyr, at the shrine of friendship—this was glorious! The idea of consummating the sacrifice, by supplying Mr. Maitland with competence, if not with wealth, kindled all the enthusiastic feeling of his nature; and, during the journey, his fancy was busy in anticipating the fervent gratitude his exertions would excite, and the exquisite felicity he should bestow.

He hoped that the magnanimity he in-

tended to display would check, if it did not entirely prevent, the lively raillery of Fanny, of which he felt some dread.

On approaching the house, he saw Mr. Spenser's travelling carriage just drawing from the door, and perceived, by the jaded state of the horses, that they had been urged to extraordinary speed. He considered the circumstance, however, as accidental, and rejoiced in the certainty of finding Spenser at home. Alighting quickly, he was making his way across the hall to the library, where he knew the family usually assembled in the morning, when a servant requested to show him to another apartment, saying, that Mr. Spenser had given strict orders not to be disturbed.

"Is he ill?" enquired Montague.

"No, Sir," said the man, with hesitation; "but have you not heard?—"

"Heard what?" asked Montague, in great alarm; "has any evil befallen my sister?"

The servant was silent.

"Speak, for Heaven's sake," exclaimed Montague; "let me know the worst. Is she ill; is she dying?"

"She is well, I believe, Sir," said the servant, mournfully.

"What then can have happened; where is she?" said Montague, sickening with apprehension.

The servant was again silent, apparently dreading to reveal the truth.

Montague, prepared for tidings of the most disastrous nature, insisted upon seeing Mr. Spenser immediately; and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the servant, forced his way into the library.

"Did I not give orders to be denied?" said Mr. Spenser, fiercely, as the door opened. On recognising Montague, the expression of his countenance changed.

"Has the sad tale already reached you?" said he, in a mournful tone; "rumour has indeed been swift."

"I know nothing," replied Montague;

shaking with agitation; "but that some terrible calamity has happened."

"The whole town by this time knows," said Mr. Spenser, "that your sister has disgraced her husband, her family, and herself for ever."

Mute with astonishment and horror, Montague allowed Mr. Spenser to go on without interruption.

"She left this house yesterday evening," continued he, "accompanied by Sir Henry Ireton, and I have reason to believe that they have by this time left England."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Montague; "what can have urged her to so desperate and dreadful a step? How is it possible that her heart could ever be estranged from you—you, whom she loved with a tenderness so fervent, so devoted?"

"It has been estranged," replied Spenser, vehemently, "by my own folly and his cursed arts. I scorn all subterfuge. I have not been guiltless. I have been an in-

dulgent, but not a faithful husband. For Fanny, then, I feel something like pity; but the wretch, the insolent wretch, who has dared to invade my rights; who has lured her by his specious, devilish arts,— shall feel my fury—my vengeance. I will hunt him through the world ere he shall escape me."

He paused, and walked in great agitation about the room.

"I know him to be a heartless villain," continued he. "Unhappy Fanny! in seeking to avenge herself for my neglect, she will heap coals of fire on her own head. From my soul I pity her."

"What can be done to save, to rescue her?" said Montague.

"Nothing! nothing upon earth," replied Mr. Spenser. "She has passed the Rubicon; and Heaven itself cannot save her now. This, however, I can promise, and let it be distinctly stated to Mr. Mowbray; that I will seek no legal redress for my wrongs. Personal revenge I must have; but towards

Fanny I will exercise forbearance. Her name shall not be dragged into a public court, coupled as it would be with infamy; she was not made for such degradation."

Mr. Spenser spoke with emotion; he was suffering under a keen sense of his own unpardonable, irretrievable errors as a husband. Conscience awoke: he saw them in their real malignity; and Fanny, degraded in the eyes of the world, her name polluted, her happiness wrecked for ever, appeared to him rather the victim than the aggressor, — an object not of scorn but of pity.

Her image rose to his view in all the sparkling brilliancy in which it at first met his eye, when hope sprung in every thought, joy beamed in every look. He contrasted this bright dawn with the deep gloom by which she might too soon be encompassed, and shuddered at the picture.

Still his remorse was rather agonizing than salutary; he was shocked by the effect of his gross violation of duty, not by the violation itself; none of the humility of

genuine repentance dwelt in his bosom; he was cherishing a spirit of deep revenge, and madly resolving either to sacrifice his own life or that of the man he hated.

Montague did not oppose these sentiments: the eloquence of Mr. Maitland, on the subject of duelling had startled him; he acknowledged the force of his reasoning, confessed that taking his solemn view of the subject, the objections to the practice were powerful; but other views of it might also be taken; and, after all, there were circumstances, occasions, in which but one course could be adopted by a man of spirit — of honour. He must submit to necessity. He considered the present as one of those occasions, in which direct disobedience to the law of God was *indispensable;* and readily offered to accompany Spenser in his pursuit of Sir Henry Ireton.

"Mr. Spenser suspected that the fugitives were on their road to Paris; but he determined to ascertain this point, and to

arrange his affairs before he attempted the pursuit.

Had he been less frank in acknowledging his defects, as a husband, Montague would probably have felt disposed to become his accuser; but there was a generosity in his candour which wholly disarmed him; and though he could by no means exonerate him, he was less disposed than Mr. Spenser to apologise for Fanny.

As he apprehended the disgraceful tale would soon find its way into the daily papers, he sent an express to Woodlands, disclosing the circumstances with as little abruptness as possible.

CHAP. XXIII.

PREPARED, by the arrival of the express, for intelligence of an extraordinary or disastrous nature, Mrs. Mowbray eagerly watched the countenance of her husband as he read the contents of the letter: its extreme paleness and agitation excited her worst fears.

He continued silent, with the letter in his hand, for a minute or two after its perusal; and then, with an ineffectual effort to speak with calmness, exclaimed,—

"The event which I have long foreboded is come to pass; your daughter is eternally disgraced. She has long been miserable; she is now guilty."

Having said these words, he placed the letter in Mrs. Mowbray's hands and left the room. They had sufficiently explained

its purport, but she eagerly ran it over, to ascertain the particulars.

She was astonished and grieved by the intelligence it contained; but it was not the sin, it was the disgrace by which she was chiefly affected. She pronounced it to be a shocking affair, a very shocking affair indeed; but she felt more irritated by the folly, the imprudence, the absurdity of Fanny, than humiliated by her guilt. To forfeit such a station, to forsake a husband who neither limited her expenses, controlled her wishes, nor interfered with her pleasures, because he happened not to be immaculate, was either an act of positive madness, or of folly the most inexcusable. She declared that Mr. Spenser was a paragon to exercise the forbearance he did; and far from pitying her mistaken and misguided daughter, she could only exclaim against her provoking and incorrigible wilfulness.

Far different were the feelings excited in the mind of Geraldine by the news of this

event. She had left Wentworth-hall for the vicarage, and the letter was forwarded to her there, accompanied by a few lines from Mrs. Mowbray.

Affected even to agony, she wept over the fall, shuddered at the guilt, and trembled for the future destiny of Fanny.

Mr. Spenser had long been to her an object of fear and disgust; and she felt astonished at the terms in which Montague spoke of his forbearance: amidst all her conviction of his guilt, however, she still traced this fatal step to a deeper source; but in acknowledging Fanny's lamentable deficiencies and total want of principle, she considered her as entitled to the sincerest pity; for even this irretrievable evil might be attributed to her wretchedly defective education.

She thought, with unaffected sympathy, of the lovely little girl, deserted and disgraced by its natural protector, and longed to watch and cherish the beauteous bud, thus rudely reft from its parent stem.

Helen Wentworth had accompanied her to the vicarage. Mr. Fullarton had been made acquainted with her state of mind, and he felt benevolently anxious to counteract the mistakes into which she had fallen. He knew that this was to be effected, not by lessening the exquisite tenderness of her conscience, not by insinuating that less piety, less purity, less holiness, would render her more useful or more happy; but by cultivating and strengthening her judgment, and by impressing on her mind the consoling truth, that God has mercifully declared, in terms the most unequivocal, that he is the 'rewarder of those who diligently seek him.'

The late fatal event in Mr. Mowbray's family, proved a lesson fruitful of instruction. Fanny, young and lovely, gifted with affluence, blessed with the finest talents, thus degrading herself into a warning, was an object calculated to excite not only the deepest pity, but the most salutary reflections.

Alas! not any of the numerous graces and gifts she had so liberally received, had been used to the glory of the Giver; they had either been wasted or abused. God had not been in all her thoughts; and in the hour of temptation she was destitute of the weapon which could alone defend, the shield which could alone protect her.

Mr. Fullarton earnestly conjured Geraldine and her young friend not to allow their feelings to evaporate in transient pity, but to lay this event to heart, that they might be induced to improve with diligence the religious advantages they enjoyed; and to cherish those principles, without which the lustre of beauty, rank, and talent, was useless as a brilliant setting without a gem.

The three days succeeding that on which Mr. Mowbray received the tidings of Fanny's flight, he passed in his study, wholly secluding himself from his family and friends. On the fourth day, he joined them as usual at breakfast, and issued a command that the name of Fanny should

never again be mentioned in his presence. He then resumed his usual habits; but the traces of suffering remained. His manner became increasingly cynical, his sarcasms more bitter, and his fits of abstraction more frequent and gloomy.

Mr. Spenser expressed a wish that his child might be placed at Woodlands, during his absence; to which Mr. Mowbray reluctantly consented, stipulating with his lady, that it should be kept from his sight as much as possible.

Mrs. Mowbray, after the lapse of a week or two, discovered that to lament and moralise over what was irremediable, was a very useless occupation; and she again crowded the house with gay visitors, invited for the avowed purpose of recruiting her spirits, after the cruel shock they had sustained.

When the intelligence of Mr. Beresford's death, and Geraldine's change of fortune, was communicated to Mr. Fullarton, he had formed the resolution of making her

the heiress of his own little property; which, though trifling when compared with the rich inheritance she had expected, would still be a welcome addition to her present slender income.

He had at first no intention of making his purpose known during his life; but feeling numerous and increasing objections to Woodlands as a permanent residence for Geraldine, he resolved to announce his design of adopting her as a daughter, and requested that henceforward the vicarage might be considered as her home.

The plan was submitted to Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray, and met with their immediate concurrence. Mrs. Mowbray, indeed, talked of her feelings, and of the pain with which she made the sacrifice; but confessed that, all things considered, and especially since that provoking business with Montague, she could not, from tenderness to Geraldine, oppose the plan.

Deeply touched by Mr. Fullarton's goodness, Geraldine expressed her sense of it,

not only by the gentle attentions, but the willing obedience of a daughter; and under his judicious kindness, her principles became daily more firm and vigorous, and her character more lovely and engaging.

CHAP. XXIV.

When Mrs. Spenser's fatal history transpired at Woodlands, Mr. Maitland had felt it impossible to adhere to his rigid system of seclusion; inexpressibly shocked, he sympathised deeply in Geraldine's affliction; and to mitigate and soothe it, again became his daily task: together they mourned over the degradation of this brilliant and lovely being, and formed many a fruitless scheme for rescuing her from the misery which must too soon become her portion.

But if the defects and fall of Fanny excited Mr. Maitland's heartfelt pity, they served to heighten the powerful contrast presented by the virtues and graces of Geraldine. He felt them to be resistless, and

having ascertained that Montague's dismissal was fixed and irretrievable, his passion for Hebrew suddenly abated; and forsaking his lexicons and lonely fireside, he joined the party at the vicarage. Prudential maxims were forgotten; he remembered only that Geraldine was the loveliest of the lovely in mind and person, and that she was unfettered by any engagement.

Whether her heart would ever be a second time enthralled, he considered doubtful: at present it was luxury to listen to her without self-reproach; to gaze upon her without feeling it to be a crime.

Her manner towards him was distinguished by a kindness the most engaging, mingled with a respect amounting to deference. Her eyes sparkled with pleasure when he entered; but it was the open, undisguised pleasure of friendship; there was none of the downcast fluttering consciousness indicating love.

She did not, however, sigh as formerly, at the name of Montague: she spoke of

him sometimes with pity, always with gentleness; but in a firm and unembarrassed tone. Mr. Maitland listened with the trembling eagerness of jealous love; but he could detect no lurking regret, no secret repining.

Nearly two months glided away in that quiet and intimate intercourse, which unfolds the character in all its minutia.

Geraldine mingled occasionally in the gaieties of Woodlands; but they seemed only to increase the zest with which she returned to the sober duties and dearer enjoyments of her more humble home. Well bred, and graceful, she could not mingle in the most brilliant scenes without exciting admiration; but it was in the domestic circle that her manner assumed a more enchanting grace, and her character unfolded in full and perfect beauty.

Every succeeding day increased Mr. Maitland's anxiety to ascertain whether her heart could again be brought to feel and acknowledge the power of love; but no-

thing appeared to satisfy his doubts: no restlessness, no embarrassment were perceptible. She seemed scarcely to have a wish ungratified; and during their little social evenings, he was frequently struck by the expression of perfect enjoyment which pervaded her countenance.

Could there then be the most distant hope for him? Of love, indeed, Geraldine did not dream; she felt that a delicious calm had stolen over her heart, that there was a charm almost exquisite in the soft serenity of her present life, and she was content to enjoy without tracing it to its source; nor did she for a moment contemplate the possibility of any change.

This state of repose and unconsciousness was interrupted by an unexpected incident.

As she was seated, as usual, with Mrs. Herbert, at her work-table, Mr. Fullarton entered the room with an open letter in his hand, and a countenance beaming with benevolent pleasure.

"You will rejoice, I am sure," said he,

"when you hear the good news I have to communicate. This letter is from Mr. Maitland; he is unexpectedly called away upon business of a very agreeable nature; having received a presentation to a living worth five hundred pounds per annum. He is not aware through whose interest the gift has been obtained, but imagines, from the channel through which it comes, that he is indebted either to Montague, or Mr. Spenser."

Geraldine's first feeling, upon hearing this intelligence, was one of warm and unmingled pleasure. She shared cordially in Mr. Fullarton's joy, and was impatient to offer her kindest congratulations. The next minute, she felt conscious of a secret fear, lest this living should be far distant from Hartley; and upon learning that it was at least fifty miles off, a pang of keen regret seized her heart, and she continued silent and thoughtful throughout the remainder of the day.

Mr. Fullarton observed, that the loss he

should sustain in Mr. Maitland, both as a curate, and a companion, would be almost irreparable; but that, notwithstanding this circumstance, he still rejoiced in an arrangement so advantageous to his young friend.

Geraldine blushed at her own selfishness, and endeavoured to persuade herself that she too rejoiced, but it was all in vain; she could only sigh, as she looked at the empty chair which he had been accustomed to occupy; and for the first time since her residence at the vicarage, felt glad when the evening had passed away.

The next day, she made a strong effort to shake off this depression; and by the help of incessant occupation, succeeded in maintaining a degree of cheerfulness during the day; but as evening drew near, at the hour when Mr. Maitland's rapidly approaching footstep had usually been heard, her spirits again sunk; she tried to talk with ease and playfulness, but a spell appeared to enchain her faculties, — an insuf-

ferable weight to press upon her heart. Was she, indeed, in the same room which had hitherto seemed the chosen abode of peace and joy? She looked round;—Mrs. Herbert's eyes still turned upon her with unaltered kindness, her smile was as sweet as ever; Mr. Fullarton talked with his accustomed intelligence, and yet the hours were insupportably long. She accused herself of ingratitude to those dear and valued friends; she thought herself inexcusable: but, notwithstanding all her exertions and self-reproaches, an indescribable heaviness of heart, defying all her efforts, remained.

CHAP. XXV.

TIME slowly wore away, and a fortnight which had appeared eternal to Geraldine, had elapsed since Mr. Maitland's departure; when, as they were seated at breakfast, his footstep was suddenly heard in the hall, and in another minute he was by her side. The vivid blush which instantly overspread Geraldine's countenance, spoke the welcome that her silence might have rendered doubtful; and not daring to trust her voice, she busied herself in changing the position of the tea-cups, till the flutter of joy and surprise had a little subsided.

Mr. Maitland had passed the three preceding days at his living; and had found the house beautifully situated, and capable, with a few alterations, of being made a very desirable residence.

The word alteration, was the only one in this sentence which had any charm for Geraldine. She indulged a secret hope, that it would be some time before the house was prepared for his reception; and her spirits were considerably revived by hearing him assure Mr. Fullarton, that no consideration would induce him to leave Hartley until a gentleman could be found as his successor, whose principles and habits met with Mr. Fullarton's entire approbation. Geraldine recollected with great complacency, that workmen were frequently dilatory; and that a curate, the counterpart of Mr. Maitland, might not readily be found. Her smiles returned;—she endeavoured to dismiss the future from her mind, and to enjoy the present moment; and Mr. Maitland, who knew not that during his absence she had drooped as a flower deprived of light and air, felt his fears that her heart was untouched, confirmed by the unchanged cheerfulness of her manner.

These fears became daily more intolerable, and he often rose with a determination of terminating this state of suspense before the close of the day; but a dread of the immediate separation, which must be the consequence of a positive rejection on the part of Geraldine, as often deterred him from accomplishing his purpose.

He lingered on, from day to day, persuading himself that no favourable opportunity had presented itself; alternately hoping, doubting, and fearing, till a letter, requiring his presence at his living, roused him to exertion.

With a rapid step, he passed through the village to the pathway leading to the vicarage, resolved that the next hour should be decisive.

It was one of those soft bright days which occasionally occur in the early part of the month of March, when, but for the leafless trees, we should believe that the reign of winter had suddenly yielded to that of summer.

As Mr. Maitland pursued his rapid walk, he saw Geraldine at some distance before him, lingering as if to enjoy the balmy breath of these first days of spring. She stopped to speak to a poor man, who, for the first time after a painful illness, was seated at his cottage door, rejoicing in the cheering beams of the sun, and in the health-giving breeze. The heavy hours of pain and sickness had often been cheered by Geraldine's kindness; and at the moment Mr. Maitland joined her, the poor man was offering his fervent thanks, and praying Heaven to bless her.

Geraldine blushed so beautifully when she found that these thanks had been overheard; her glowing cheeks and silent embarrassment formed so fine a contrast with the pallid countenance and feeble garrulity of the invalid, that Mr. Maitland thought her infinitely more lovely than ever; and as she hurried on to escape the repeated thanks of the poor old man, he drew her

arm within his and walked on for some minutes in silence.

Geraldine at length interrupted the pause by a remark upon the beauty of the morning; to which Mr. Maitland made no reply.

Rather surprised, she repeated this remark with more emphasis.

"Pardon me," exclaimed he, "it is, indeed, very beautiful; but I had scarcely perceived it."

"Can such a sun as this be wasted upon you?" said Geraldine, looking up at him with a playful smile.

"Yes," replied he; "even such a sun may shine in vain for me. I must leave Hartley to-day, and —"

"To-day!" repeated Geraldine: the smile which had lighted up her features being instantly succeeded by an expression of the deepest disappointment.

"May I then hope," said Mr. Maitland, as he watched this rapid transition, "that you will sometimes regret my absence;

that you are not entirely, utterly, indifferent upon the subject?"

"Indifferent!" said Geraldine, in a tone of gentle reproach; "can you think me so unfeeling, — so ungrateful?"

"I think you the gentlest and loveliest of human beings!" exclaimed Mr. Maitland, with uncontrollable fervor; "and you have long been dearer to me than language can express."

Geraldine continued silent; her heart beat with a violence which prevented her uttering a word. Surprise rapidly kindling into delight, enchained her lips, and all power of expression failed.

"Speak, dearest Geraldine!" continued Mr. Maitland. "Tell me if I have presumed too far — if this confession is, indeed, unpardonable — if from this hour we must separate for ever — or be eternally united in the precious bonds of mutual affection."

Not for a moment could Geraldine hesitate between such an alternative. In trembling accents, but in a tone which

instantly changed Mr. Maitland's fears to extasy, she acknowledged herself unequal to the separation; and, before she could recover her composure, or Mr. Maitland had exhausted half his expressions of fervent gratitude, they reached the gate of the vicarage.

CHAP. XXVI.

While these events occurred at the vicarage, Mrs. Spenser was drinking deeply of the cup of mortification and misery.

The fatal step she had taken had scarcely afforded her momentary relief. When she rashly acceded to the schemes of Sir Henry Ireton, her heart exulted in the idea that her husband would feel the jealous pangs which he had so often inflicted: but she was doomed to experience, in its utmost force, that

> Revenge, at first though sweet,
> Bitter ere long, back on itself recoils.

It scarcely sustained her through the agony of contemplating, for the last time, the lovely child she thus cruelly abandoned; nor could it quiet the anguish of her heart

as she cast a lingering look upon the home which she was forsaking for ever.

The incessant and devoted attentions of Sir Henry Ireton in some degree soothed the perturbation of the moment, and from Richmond they proceeded, not as Mr. Spenser had imagined, to France, but to a house which Sir Henry had engaged in a small village in Dorsetshire.

There he purposed remaining under the shelter of an assumed name, until the sensation excited by the affair in the fashionable circles should have subsided.

To a situation thus remote and secluded was Fanny conveyed in the month of December, and she soon found the raptures and gratitude of her lover a poor exchange for the privileges she had forfeited.

The few respectable neighbouring families were not slow in discovering that there was something ambiguous in the situation of the parties; and the compliment of a passing bow was the only mark of civility they deemed it prudent to bestow.

Thus excluded from the pleasures of society, and totally unfitted for solitude, goaded by recollections of the past, and wearied by the monotony of the present, every succeeding hour increased the wretchedness of Fanny.

Sir Henry, indeed, continued to watch her looks, and live upon her smiles; but this homage, though it soothed her vanity, left her heart untouched; and Fanny, pining, sad, and spiritless, was so complete a contrast to the Fanny whom he had wooed and won, that he soon began to regret, and at length to murmur, at the transformation.

She, in return, complained of the solitude in which they lived, and proposed a visit to Paris until their future plans could be arranged.

Sir Henry complied, but with a secret feeling of pique and mortification at the discovery that his society was so little prized, which boded future disunion.

Upon their arrival at Paris, Fanny sought

to lose her regrets in dissipation, and mingled incessantly in the gayest scenes and parties. The terms on which she lived with Sir Henry scarcely excited a remark. It was merely whispered that she had made an *arrangement* with her friend; and the Parisian belles had not a thought, or even a gesture to waste upon such an every-day affair.

But though the accommodating courtesy of French manners, and the brilliant scenes in which she again engaged, could chase away *ennui*, they could not shield her from corroding care:

Among the influx of visitors to the French capital, were many English families of rank and fashion, with whom she had formerly associated; and Fanny was deeply mortified by their marked and pointed neglect.

One or two, indeed, of the least fastidious, admitted her into their coteries; but from the majority she was doomed to endure either the averted glance, which bespok

determined avoidance, or the haughty stare, indicating recognition, and repelling intimacy.

In vain she armed herself with looks equally haughty, and assumed a careless and disengaged tone. Her heart was pierced; the sting had penetrated deeply; and the concealment of her feelings served only to increase their intensity.

Sir Henry, who had not forgiven her obvious indifference, became daily less prodigal of his smiles and compliments; and in a short time, transferred them to those, who had answering smiles to give.

In the present irritable state of Fanny's mind, this was not to be endured: she had recourse to reproaches and remonstrance; talked of the sacrifices she had made, the station she had resigned for him.

To all this Sir Henry listened with cold politeness; acknowledged with a smile, which might have been mistaken for a sneer, his infinite obligations; and then quitted her to pass the morning in the bou-

doir of a new favourite, and the evening at the gaming-table.

The transition from coldness to indifference, and from indifference to alienation, is not very difficult; and to this point Sir Henry was rapidly advancing.

Fanny was now doomed to listen to complaints of the enormous amount of their expenditure, and to hints on the virtue of frugality. She thought upon the indulgent husband, who, even to the moment of her flight, had lavished a thousand rich gifts upon her; and anguish mingled with the contempt and indignation with which her heart was almost bursting. Coarse allusions to her situation; insults, couched in the specious form of apologies; affected lamentations over the impossibility of introducing her into certain circles, because the wives and daughters were all *sans reproche*;—all this was Fanny destined to bear, not for the man she loved, but for one whom she despised. Weary of herself, and returning hatred for scorn; detesting solitude; yet

wretched in society; humiliated, but not self-abased; desponding, but not repentant —her life became daily more irksome. She looked forward, but in the dreary prospect not a single spot appeared upon which hope might rest. A residence in England would expose her to greater mortifications. She reverted to the past; and, recalling the warning of Geraldine, shuddered at the conviction, that she had indeed involved herself in hopeless and irretrievable misery.

But Fanny was not formed for patient endurance; and thoughts at once gloomy and desperate, took possession of her mind: she now passed whole evenings in solitude, pleading indisposition as an excuse for excluding her Parisian acquaintance.

In these hours, the picture of her early home presented itself, invested with all the softening tints which memory gives. Father, mother, brother, friend, were there assembled: her child, perhaps, was sporting around them; but never more would its

light footstep, and laughing voice, salute her ear. Alas! for her, there was neither child nor kindred; they were lost for ever. She was an outcast, forlorn and disgraced.

CHAP. XXVII.

At a late hour one evening, she was roused from these melancholy musings, by a sort of struggle in the anti-room leading to the apartment in which she was sitting. She had given strict orders to be denied, and the servant was repeating them in every possible variety of key, but apparently in vain.

"I insist upon seeing her immediately," exclaimed a voice, at which Fanny trembled, though its tone was familiar to her; and a moment after, Montague hastily entered, followed by the servant, eager to exculpate himself. She instantly dismissed him, and shaking with emotion, scarcely dared to raise her eyes to Montague; who, over-

powered by contending feelings, stood in silence before her.

At length, endeavouring to rally her spirits and conceal her confusion, she exclaimed in a tone of assumed gaiety, —

"What can possibly have brought you to Paris? not love of me, I am afraid; but whatever be your errand, you are welcome."

Montague shuddered, and, with a manner somewhat cold and stern, replied, "I came on no peaceful errand. I came not hither to sanction your crime, but to assist in avenging it. Alas! dearly has that vengeance been purchased."

Fanny, mute with terror, looked earnestly in Montague's face, as if to implore his forbearance.

"I see," continued he, in a mournful and tremulous tone, "that feeling is not extinct, though honour and virtue are gone for ever; and I can pity you, for the hour of retribution is come." Then, assuming an accent of greater firmness — "My tale is brief," said he, "though terrible. Sir

Henry Ireton and your husband met this evening by appointment. Your lover is safe"—he paused.

"And my husband?" exclaimed Fanny, grasping his arm in agony—

"Was shot through the heart," continued Montague, in a deep, low tone, "and died in my arms."

A mortal paleness covered the face of Fanny; and, trembling violently, she clung to him for support.

Placing her on a sofa, he stood by her side, contemplating in silence the workings of her agonized countenance. After the lapse of a few minutes, it assumed a sad composure.

"Have you any thing more to tell me?" said she, speaking in a voice of forced and unnatural calmness; "any message of wrath, or any of forgiveness? I can bear it now."

"From the fatal moment of your flight," said Montague, deeply affected, "he spoke of you as one; more sinned against than

sinnning;' sought not to palliate his errors; to conceal your wrongs; generously forbore a legal prosecution; protected your name from infamy; provided for you with munificence, and died to avenge the disgrace you had inflicted."

Fanny made a strong effort to control her emotion, and was about to reply, when the voice of Sir Henry, giving some directions to his servants, and his approaching footsteps were heard.

"Oh! hide me, take me from him," exclaimed Fanny, clinging to Montague, with agony and despair; "his sight is hateful.—Do not," continued she, shuddering from head to foot, "do not leave me with the murderer of my husband."

"Unfortunate, as guilty," cried Montague, pressing her for a moment fondly to his bosom, and then struggling to free himself from her grasp; "I can do little for you. If you wish to consult or hear from me, this is my address," said he, throwing his card upon the table. But Sir Henry

Ireton and I, can meet only as mortal enemies. Do not detain me, therefore, under his roof, lest his blood be upon my head."

Fanny relaxed her grasp; and shrieking as Sir Henry entered the room, fell back upon the sofa in violent hysterics. The servants were summoned to her assistance; and Montague, muttering curses upon her seducer, immediately left the house.

When the paroxysm had subsided, and Fanny, exhausted by its violence, appeared in a quiescent state, Sir Henry, dismissing her attendants, approached the sofa on which she lay. She shuddered involuntarily as he drew near, but listened to him in silence.

"I have but a few minutes to spare," said he, "and can grant you but a few, to decide upon the plan you may choose to pursue. The unhappy occurrence of this evening, obliges me to leave Paris immediately. In half an hour, I hope to be beyond its gates, and shall travel by the speediest conveyance

to Switzerland. Will you, or will you not be my companion?"

"Never!" exclaimed Fanny, looking at him, with an expression of terror and abhorrence. "The tie between us is for ever broken: Oh! that I had died before it had been formed."

"If you have any wish to express,—any thing to ask before we part," said, he coldly, "let me hear it now; for I have not a moment to waste."

"I have no wish to express, no favour to ask, nothing to say," replied Fanny, speaking with increasing and frightful rapidity. "The only favour, the greatest kindness you can show, is to leave me this moment, and for ever. Do not come near me," said she, shrinking from him and shuddering violently as he offered to take her hand; "I feel polluted by your touch."

Sir Henry, darting upon her a look of fury and contempt, left the room; and in a quarter of an hour, the sound of his carriage-wheels was heard in the court-yard, and she was left in silence and solitude.

CHAP. XXVIII.

"He is gone, I am released from his hateful presence," said Fanny, as the sound of the carriage became more distant, and at length died away. "I am *alone;* I have neither home, nor name, nor husband, nor lover, nor friend: every tie that bound me to life is broken. I have brought grief upon my family, disgrace upon my child, death upon my husband, infamy upon myself."

She paused for a few minutes: "Oh! that I could die this instant," exclaimed she, walking up and down the room in a perturbation, which every moment increased:—"I should then be at peace; disgrace, misery, remorse, all would be

over. I have nothing left on earth. I am guilty, forlorn, wretched: life is hateful to me; but I can shake off this oppressive weight; I can free myself from this insupportable burthen: and why should I hesitate? Why should I tremble."

She passed rapidly on to her dressing-room. Desperation was in every look, every word, every gesture.

For some months past, she had habituated herself to the stimulus of laudanum, when more than usually depressed. A phial stood in its accustomed place. She poured its contents into a glass. Her face was flushed; her eyes beamed with unnatural brightness. She paused a moment, and a moment only; then eagerly raised the glass to her lips, and swallowed the fatal draught.

"It is done!" exclaimed she, in a tone of exultation. "In a few hours this aching heart will be still; in a few days the grave will close upon me, and I shall be forgotten, or remembered only with pity.'

She threw herself into a chair, and remained absorbed in meditation.

Montague had parted from her, with feelings of deep commiseration. Powerfully affected by the anguish he had witnessed, he passed the night in meditating upon her situation, and devising plans of relief and consolation.

He had no doubt that an immediate separation from Sir Henry would take place; and he hoped that her present acute sufferings would induce her readily to coincide, in any plan of retirement which might be suggested.

Already, in idea, he had fixed upon a retreat, in which she might be soothed by his visits and attentions; and where, if she could not recover happiness, she might in time be restored to peace.

From these reflections which had completely banished sleep; he was roused about four o'clock in the morning by a message from his sister, requesting an immediate interview. In some trepidation,

but with the utmost speed, he obeyed the summons; and on arriving at the house, was conducted to Mrs. Spenser's dressing room.

She half rose from the couch on which she was reclining, as he approached. The temporary excitement had subsided; her cheek was no longer flushed, her eyes no longer sparkled: extending her hand to him —

" I meant to have spared you this sad scene," said she; "but my courage fails — I cannot — I dare not die *alone*."

" Die!" exclaimed Montague, in dreadful alarm; " you know not what you say, what you mean; your mind is disturbed."

" Too well I know," replied Fanny, shaking her head mournfully; " I sought death as a friend — but he comes armed with terrors."

" Fanny!" exclaimed Montague, taking both her hands within his, and looking earnestly in her face, " torture me not thus cruelly; — in pity — in mercy — unsay those terrible words."

Fanny answered only by convulsive shudderings; and Montague, casting a rapid glance round the room, snatched up the empty phial, and, dashing it in horror to the ground, exclaimed —

"Oh! God — it is, indeed, too true."

After the pause of a moment, he flew to the bell, and instantly dispatched the servants for medical assistance.

"It is too late," said Fanny, in a feeble tone: "human aid can avail me nothing; the torpor of death is stealing over me."

Montague walked up and down the room in agony.

"Come near me; — speak to me," continued she, fixing her languid and heavy eyes on his; "have you no whisper of peace — no word of comfort to give?"

Montague could not utter a syllable; he could only gaze on her in speechless horror.

"Tell me that my doubts and fears are vain," said she, in a voice almost inarticulate with terror and agitation; "that

in death, at least, I shall find rest and peace."

"May the God of mercy pity and pardon you," said Montague, throwing his arms round her, and supporting her drooping head upon his bosom.

"Oh! tell me that He is merciful," said Fanny, clinging closely to Montague; "repeat it to me a thousand times; for I can think only of his justice. Uncalled, unbidden, unprepared,—I am entering eternity.—Oh! will He indeed have mercy?"

Montague endeavoured to soothe her; but his words afforded feeble consolation. Terror seemed to shake her frame almost to dissolution; conscience awoke from its deep slumber. A sudden light seemed to burst upon her soul; but it was no mild and benignant ray: like the imperfect and fitful gleam of a dull sepulchral lamp, it disclosed only images of gloom and terror.

In a land of light, where the beams of

truth penetrate the lowliest cottage, and guide the simple peasant, by the path of humility and faith, to the throne of God, and the society of angels and archangels, Fanny, richly endowed by nature, and fortune, had walked in darkness and error. She had wilfully closed her eyes against the light, and its sudden flash now served rather to bewilder than to guide.

Her senses wandered, her words became confused and incoherent. She called upon her husband, asked wildly for her child, and, at length, faint and exhausted, sunk back on the couch, and remained quiet, till the arrival of the physician, who immediately perceived that all remedies must be ineffectual.

Until this moment, Montague had indulged a feeble hope that her life might yet be saved; and upon hearing the fatal decision, he hung over her in an agony of fondness and despair.

A heavy stupor was creeping over her frame, but an expression of anguish still

pervaded her countenance. Scarcely could she return the anxious pressure of his hand; and her dull, and heavy eye, feebly raised to his, appeared vainly to implore assistance and relief.

Montague continued to gaze in pity and terror, almost doubting the reality of the scene before him. Could this, indeed, be Fanny, — the gay, the brilliant lovely being who had seemed the living image of happiness. How often had he seen those dim and closing eyes, bright with joy and hope; that marble cheek glowing with the rich hue of health and beauty; those pale and quivering lips encircled with dimpling smiles. Alas! the icy hand of death was upon her; her eyes closed, her fingers relaxed their grasp; she slept to wake no more.

CHAP. XXIX.

MONTAGUE withdrew from this dreadful scene in a state of distress and horror which defied the power of language: nor was it in mind alone he suffered; the body sympathised in these struggles; he returned to his hotel with every nerve unstrung, and every pulse beating with violence.

In vain he strove to shake off the symptoms of fever by which he was oppressed; he threw himself upon the bed and tried to sleep, but the form of his murdered friend, the image of his dying sister, pursued his slumbers; he unclosed his eyes; still they seemed to hover near him; he turned again and again on his restless bed, but could not escape them. Multiplying into countless numbers, or enlarging to a

gigantic size, they appeared to surround him on every side. A burning fever raged in his veins, and in a few hours sense and consciousness were gone.

After seven days of severe suffering, in which his life was despaired of, the disease yielded to the remedies employed; and Montague, though feeble and emaciated, was pronounced by his physicians to be out of danger.

Dreading to revert to the past; in a foreign land, with no dear familiar face on which to look for sympathy or kindness, he was musing on his forlorn situation, when his servant announced the arrival of a gentleman from England; and in a few minutes his friend Maitland was by his bed-side. He had travelled night and day from the moment the sad intelligence reached him. It had been conveyed by Mr. Spenser's confidential servant; who, upon finding that Montague was dangerously ill, set off without delay for England; and, unwilling abruptly to communicate

such tidings at Woodlands, applied to Mr. Maitland for directions upon the subject.

Deeply affected by the dreadful tale, he hurried to the vicarage, and leaving to Mr. Fullarton the painful task of disclosing it at Woodlands, after a brief interview with Geraldine, left her, to seek, and watch by his afflicted friend.

A week after his arrival at Paris Geraldine received the following letter:

" *To Miss Beresford*;

" My dearest Geraldine;

" To part from you when your heart was oppressed with the heaviest affliction, to sacrifice the privilege of soothing and consoling you at such a moment, was almost the only circumstance which could increase the poignancy of my feelings on leaving England; but I will not dwell upon them, I will rather hasten to impart the consolation that is in my power, by assuring you that Montague is gradually recovering. His spirits are still exceedingly depressed,

and the effect of this shock must be felt long after its first violence has subsided. Time alone will restore his mind to composure; and I earnestly hope that the impression produced on it by these melancholy events, will be as salutary as it is powerful.

" I arrived in Paris a few hours before the last melancholy rites were performed over the remains of our unfortunate friends. An English family, well acquainted with Montague, and touched by his affecting situation, had made the necessary arrangements. They were interred together in the church-yard of Neuilly. I followed them to the grave; and never will the emotions of that sad and solemn hour be forgotten. Alas! this was no common event, that might be dismissed from the mind with a passing sigh. — Could the young and gay contemplate, as I have done, this wreck of all that was fair, lovely, and promising; they would perhaps learn wis-

dom. The grave was closing over youth unblighted by disease, beauty untouched by decay, genius in its prime and vigour. All the tenderest sympathies of my nature were awakened; and, to add to the bitterness of these feelings, I dared not indulge the blessed hope which alone sustains the Christian at such a moment. Oh! my beloved Geraldine, it is heart-rending to stand by the grave of those whom we have loved, and tremble for their eternal destiny; to feel that they are lost to us upon earth; to fear that they have no part in the felicity of heaven: but let me not dwell upon this harrowing and melancholy subject.

"We shall leave Paris as soon as it is practicable for Montague to travel; he is anxious, even to impatience, to quit a place where he has endured such variety of suffering; and I am longing twenty times a day to be again near you; again indulging those delightful anticipations, in which my heart sometimes takes refuge, even amidst

all the sadness of the present moment; till then, adieu, dearest Geraldine.

"I am your faithfully attached
and grateful
"CHARLES MAITLAND."

The deepest gloom now pervaded the once gay region of Woodlands: smiles and cheerful sounds were banished from that spot, where Pleasure had appeared to hold her court. Even the spirit and elasticity of Mrs. Mowbray's mind seemed to be crushed by this blow; but the unrestrained expression of her affliction was less powerfully affecting than the silent endurance of Mr. Mowbray. Repressing sympathy, and rejecting consolation; deeming the one officious, and the other obtrusive; the friendship of man yielded him no relief, and the over-ruling providence of God, he thought of as an idle dream. The joys of the world he felt to be fugitive, its hopes visionary; but to him all beyond was shrouded in clouds and darkness: no star appeared to gild the gloom, no friendly beacon wel-

comed him to a land of light and joy. He now considered life as a penance rather than a blessing; and man as a being created only to suffer, to struggle, and to die.

Alas! he had rejected that Holy Word which is 'a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the path;' and the cold and bleak region of scepticism offered neither rest nor refuge. Fanny had been his favourite child; he had long mourned over her blighted hopes; and the melancholy termination of her brief career he felt at his heart's core. But, even upon Montague's return, he maintained a stern and resolute silence on the subject. Neither enquiry nor observation escaped him; he spoke of his son's illness with concern, and congratulated him on his recovery, without referring by the most distant allusion to the melancholy event by which it had been preceded.

The sight of Fanny's child, whose striking resemblance to her unfortunate mother could not escape attention, was exceedingly

painful to him; and he not only declined taking any active part in Mr. Spenser's affairs, but felt extremely anxious that the little girl should find another protector, and be transferred to another home.

Mr. Spenser appeared to have had some consciousness that this would be the case; and in the will which he made, previous to his fatal journey to Paris, provided against it, by nominating three guardians for his child, who were to act either in conjunction with Mr. Mowbray, should he accept the trust, or independently if he declined it. Among these Mr. Maitland was surprised to find his name included, as his acquaintance with Mr. Spenser, from the dissimilarity of their pleasures and pursuits, had scarcely grown into intimacy, and never ripened into friendship. The mystery was, however, explained by a letter in Mr. Spenser's hand-writing, addressed to Geraldine, which he had directed Montague to deliver to her, if his meeting with Sir Henry Ireton should terminate fatally.

" *To Miss Beresford.*

" My dear Geraldine;

" In any other circumstances than those in which I am at present involved, I should not presume to address you; but at the moment when this letter is placed in your hands, my follies, if not forgotten, will be forgiven; all resentment will be dismissed, and the softer sentiments of regret and pity alone fill your heart.

" The events of the last few weeks have awakened feelings of which I was before unconscious, and fears and anxieties, which I have vainly endeavoured to dismiss, press upon my mind. It derives consolation, however, from the conviction that you will not resist the appeal I now make; that you will accept the charge I solemnly commit to your care, that you will cherish, with maternal tenderness, that dear child, already disgraced and forsaken by her unfortunate mother; and for whom, when the words I am now dictating meet your

eye, the tie of paternal love will exist no longer.

"Let her helplessness, her innocence, plead for her; — she will be rich and lovely. Oh! guard her from the thousand dangers, guide her amidst the temptations to which beauty and affluence are exposed.

"I am perfectly acquainted with the change which has recently occurred in your plans and prospects. I am aware that the station you are destined to fill, will be neither brilliant nor splendid; that your life will probably pass away with little intercourse, either with the great or gay. But such a home is precisely the asylum I should prefer for my child; — peace and purity will dwell there. It will be a sanctuary which the foot of vice dare not violate. Take her, then, dear Geraldine, to your home and to your heart. Forget who it is that implores this favour; think of her, not as the daughter of the man whom you condemned, the libertine who excited your just indignation; but as the

child of the unhappy friend whom you once tenderly loved; in whose society you so much delighted, and who, even in her present fallen and degraded state, condemned by the world and rejected by her family, has still a claim upon your pity and compassion.

" I know that there is one person whom you will consider it your duty to consult before you comply with my request. I have given him legal authority to act as guardian to my child; and, from my acquaintance with his character and principles, I am disposed to believe that he will not only accept the trust, but fulfil it with undeviating integrity, and kindness the most judicious. A delightful prospect is opening before him: may no cloud arise to obscure its brightness. Into that home, which you will together share, neither jealousies nor discord will enter: may it be undisturbed by care or sorrow. Perhaps when you are rejoicing in the possession of such a home, you will sometimes revert to

the fate of those early friends, whose lot appeared bright and blessed as your own; and who,

> Misled by *pleasure's* meteor ray,
> By passion driven,

made shipwreck of honour, virtue, and happiness. Tenderly you will unfold the sad tale to your precious charge; and whilst you teach her to avoid, forbid her not to pity the errors of her unfortunate mother. But let me not distress you by anticipations of the future, lest you shrink from undertaking so difficult a task. None can fulfil it with such delicacy and tenderness as yourself. Accept it, then, I conjure you, and with it my earnest and affectionate wishes for your happiness.

"You will not, I hope, reject my parting assurances of admiration and esteem, nor be offended, if I confess, that it is with powerful emotion and deep regret that I bid you farewell for ever.

"H. SPENSER."

CHAP. XXX.

After the perusal of this letter, Geraldine, too much affected to speak her feelings, put it into Mr. Maitland's hands, and silently awaited his decision.

" My dearest Geraldine," said he, with the most soothing tenderness of voice and manner, " I hope that, on this occasion, and on all others of any importance, we shall be of one heart and one mind. The sacred and interesting charge thus entrusted to our care is precious in itself, but still more so, as a pledge of that close and intimate bond in which we shall soon be united. It only increases my fond and earnest desire to see you in that home, in which I hope to share, and lighten your duties, and hush all your cares to repose. I cannot be selfish enough to press this

point at present; but when your spirits are tranquillised, and peace is in some degree restored at Woodlands, I must be allowed to claim the fulfilment of that dear promise, upon which my earthly happiness depends."

Geraldine felt hers to be too intimately interwoven with that of Mr. Maitland, to oppose his wish; and she confessed, that the home of which he loved to think, appeared to her, also, a haven of joy and peace, in which she should delight to take shelter; but she knew that some months must elapse before their mutual wishes could be realised. Time alone could soften the remembrance of Fanny's fate, and dissipate the gloom which hung over the spirits of the family at Woodlands; and she sympathised too acutely in their affliction, to dwell upon her own happier prospects, until that affliction was alleviated.

There appeared little probability that this would speedily be the case; for woes clustered round them. They received letters from India, with the intelligence

that Mrs. Harcourt's health had declined so rapidly, that she had been recommended by her physicians to return to her native air, as the only remedy likely to effect its restoration; and as she was to sail almost immediately after the letter was written, they were in daily expectation of her arrival.

The explanations and recapitulations that must be entered into, and the effect which they might produce in her present delicate state, combined to make them look forward to this event with dread; and to increase the heaviness of heart under which they were already suffering.

At length, a letter was received from Plymouth, announcing her arrival; and in a few days, Georgiana was again under the paternal roof, in the home of her infancy.

Colonel Harcourt had been detained in India on professional business, and she returned alone. She had left England, rich in health and beauty; she returned pale, wasted, and drooping; her figure had lost

its grace, her cheek its bloom, her eyes their lustre. Fatigued by the exertion of travelling, she could scarcely return the affectionate caresses with which she was welcomed by her family; and immediately retired to her chamber, where she remained for some days. Reduced by bodily suffering, and wholly deficient in mental vigour, she passed day after day in peevishly detailing her complaints, and in querulous murmurs over the hardships of her destiny.

The news of her sister's death had excited comparatively but little emotion; she shed a few tears, indeed, and heaved a few sighs for 'poor Fanny;' but her sensibility to her own sufferings was so keen, that she had none to spare for those of others. Her vanity was mortified by the effect produced by the change in her personal appearance. She had been accustomed to see every eye turned upon her with an expression of admiration and delight; this expression was now exchanged for a glance

of pity, or half-suppressed astonishment; and she felt inclined to resent rather than be grateful for the sympathy which confirmed her own fears.

The physicians who were consulted gave little hope of recovery, but thought it possible, that, by great care, her life might be prolonged for a few years. This opinion, which she extorted from them by the eagerness of her questions, while it increased her despondency, furnished her with a plea for greater self-indulgence.

The attentions and kindness of those around were accepted, not as a free-will offering, but as a tribute which they were bound to pay; and she wearied herself, and them, by incessant wishes and vain experiments to prolong a life which, though she could no longer enjoy, she was not content to resign.

The sight of youth, health, and beauty, increased the bitterness of her repinings; and when Geraldine hovered near her with a friendly wish to amuse and soothe her,

she was frequently surprised by the peevish discontent, and shocked by the asperity with which her attentions were repulsed. If she sought to entertain by sprightly anecdote, Georgiana was not in spirits to bear it; if she alluded to graver and more solemn subjects, "it was cruel to increase her sadness by such gloomy conversation;" if left alone, she called herself forsaken; if intreated to join the family party, "they forgot her feebleness and delicacy, and had no pity for her sufferings." But the patient tenderness of Geraldine was not to be subdued; she paid daily visits to the poor invalid; listened with humane attention to the oft-repeated tale of her complaints; endured her waywardness with unvaried sweetness, and watched the happy moment to glide in a word of hope and comfort.

Mrs. Mowbray soon became weary of such a scene. She had been for a time overwhelmed by the disastrous fate of Fanny, and grieved by the obvious decline of Georgiana; but the lapse of some months

had calmed her feelings and habit resumed its sway.

Montague, unable to meet Geraldine with composure, had adopted his mother's suggestion, and was now in London, deeply engaged in the study of the law; and Mrs. Mowbray, declaring that it was impossible to live without society, and that the company of a few friends would be of infinite service, both to Georgiana and herself, once more issued those well-turned and flattering invitations which she had so often found resistless. Lady Cotterel and her daughter were among the first visitants who obeyed the summons; and, as Lord and Lady Glenmore were then at their *cottage ornée*, the usual routine of dinners and civilities commenced. Edmund Wentworth was also in the country, and his visits at Woodlands were more frequent than ever. He was always at hand to ride, or walk, or laugh, or argue with Miss Cotterel; and the lady seemed inclined to endure, if not to accept his attentions.

She had been introduced at a favourable moment at Wentworth Hall: Miss Wentworth was paying a visit to her old friend Miss Vincent; her absence was a relief to all the party, and the unobtrusive and cheerful piety of Helen, could not now be contemplated, even by Edmund, without a sentiment of respect. It was fortunate that Miss Wentworth had accepted her friend's invitation; for her opinions were daily losing something of their sobriety, and becoming more wild and extravagant. Finding herself wiser than some teachers, she began to fancy herself wiser than all; and was indeed in a fair way to become 'wise above what is written.' She projected new systems, suggested new interpretations, discovered new lights, and at length persuaded herself that, at the ripe age of twenty-five, she could assist to re-model and purify that system of Christianity, which had been received with humble reverence, by Newton, Locke, and Boyle, and which had excited the admir-

ation of the learned, and formed the consolation of the pious during successive ages.

Miss Vincent, rather alarmed by the novel opinions of her former pupil, and calculating upon the influence she might still possess, invited her, in the hope of restraining these aberrations; and Miss Wentworth accepted the invitation with alacrity, anxious to make a proselyte of her old friend, and to display her zeal, and disseminate her opinions in a distant neighbourhood.

CHAP. XXXI.

Miss Cotterel perceived, at a glance, the deficiencies and *agrémens* of Wentworth Hall; and in a morning call at the vicarage, finding Geraldine alone, detailed her opinions without reserve.

"This morning," said she, "we have made our courtesies in every house in the neighbourhood; and I persuaded Mrs. Mowbray to leave me for half an hour at the vicarage on our return; reserving the *bonne bouche*, as children do, for the last."

"I hope these visits have put you in such good humour with our neighbourhood," returned Geraldine, "that we may hope to retain you in it for some time longer."

"Why, yes, upon the whole I like it

vastly well," said Miss Cotterel. "To begin with Wentworth Hall; there is so much sterling old-fashioned excellence about Mr. Wentworth, and so much innocence about that pretty Helen, that one feels inclined, for their sakes, to tolerate Mrs. Wentworth's *marvellous* stupidity. She appears constantly in the predicament of the old woman in the play, who was 'thinking of nothing.' I despaired of hearing her speak a syllable until she suddenly burst forth with an eulogium on over-cast, satin-stitch, and catherine-wheels. Well, from thence we went to take a peep at the bride, the happy Mrs. Latimer: she was as bridal as possible; all softness and beauty; blushed a great deal and talked very little. I am sure St. Pierre's doctrine of contrasts is exemplified in that pair; for if she does not know how to talk, he does not know how to be silent: however, with those fine animal spirits, and that fine flow of words, he must be very useful as a country neighbour, and invaluable at a dinner-

party. From thence we proceeded to the Bernards; and there the first person whom we encountered, was that short-square, good humoured vulgarian, Mrs. Abingdon. My mother, who, to do her justice, is certainly one of the best-bred women in the world, talked to her precisely as if she had been one of her own *caste;* and listened with the most astonishing and praise-worthy civility, to her comparative estimate of the joys of town and country; which was summed up in these decisive words — 'Well, to be sure, the country is *wonderful* pleasant; but, after all, give me London.' "

Geraldine, laughing, enquired whether Miss Cotterel found Harriet in a gay or sentimental mood.

" Oh! she was as languishing as possible," replied Miss Cotterel, " receiving with the prettiest consciousness imaginable, the attentions of a vastly finical-looking gentleman, whom she was anxious to show off as her lover. If I had not discovered the se-

cret by her looks, I must have found it out by the tender sigh which she heaved, when I wished her good morning. You need not smile; for, certainly, it was a most delicate and touching mode of revealing the truth. Our next visit was to Lady Glenmore: you know, or rather you do not know, that we hate one another. Lady Glenmore thinks art, and I think sincerity, the first, second, and third requisite in the female character. She calls my sincerity *candour* when I am within hearing, and *bluntness* in my absence; and, as I am rather fond of giving things their right names, I invariably call her soft, smooth manner dissimulation. She is, and was, and will be my aversion: however, now that we have this snug room to ourselves, instead of talking of her, let me enquire a little into your own affairs. Do you know that in spite of that pretty, quiet, demure look of yours, I suspect that you are a sad coquette.

"Pray, when is this 'holy palmer' who

has won your 'affections so light and so vain,' to carry you home as his bride. Oh! if you blush 'celestial rosy-red' about it, when couched in such pretty delicate terms, I may as well ask the question plainly; so, pray, tell me, my dear Miss Beresford, when are we to expect bride-cake and favours from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Maitland?"

"And tell me, my dear Miss Cotterel," said Geraldine; "when are we to expect them from Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Wentworth?"

"Oh! that business is quite in its dawn," exclaimed Miss Cotterel, "not discoverable by any eye less practised than yours in such concerns; and if it ever should happen, it will be the most common-place affair imaginable; — no difficulties — no rivalship — not a single parental frown to be hoped for, to give the thing a little spirit."

"Now there will be a great deal more *éclat* about yours; for, depend upon it, Montague will either bribe some one to forbid the

banns at the critical moment when you are blushing and trembling before the altar; or he will spring from behind some pillar, and shoot Mr. Maitland, just as he is handing you out of church. You know, after a man has been once mad enough to send a challenge to a clergyman, there is no knowing what lengths he may go. So I recommend, that Mr. Maitland should provide himself with invisible armour, or get himself plunged into the Styx, or some such expedient, to prevent the possibility of your being held up as a warning to all coquettes in days to come."

"I am certain," said Geraldine, "that in 'sober seriousness,' you acquit me of coquetry; therefore it is not worth while to combat a phantom."

"Whatever may be my own private opinion," returned Miss Cotterel, "I can tell you that half the young ladies in London, are indignant at this transfer of your heart. If, upon discovering Montague to be unfaithful, you had drowned yourself,

like Ophelia, or if you had pined yourself into a consumption, and died in a regular, genteel, proper manner, of a broken heart, they would have worshipped your memory; but, to marry and be happy, is out of all rule. You have disappointed them dreadfully. Their most substantial consolation, however, arises from the reflection, that Montague is at liberty; for, with the help of his fine eyes and fine verses, he did prodigious execution among them on his *début.*

"Now, I know by your look, that you are thinking what a charming thing it will be to escape from these impertinent, malicious young ladies, to a certain pretty quiet rectory, where you may exclaim all day long

What is the world to me,
It's pride, its pleasures, and its nonsense all.

Why, my dear," continued she, laughing, "you have absolutely picked Mrs. Herbert's spectacle-case to pieces: do pray hide it, for it is the most ridiculous-looking thing I ever saw."

Geraldine blushed, laughed, laid down the spectacle-case, and, snatching up some muslin, began to work with surprising industry.

"Do not flatter yourself, however," said Miss Cotterel, "that, when you run away from the rest of this wicked world, you will get rid of me. Whether maid or wife, I intend to bestow myself upon you now and then, for the charitable purpose of reminding you, that you are still upon earth, and have not actually made your escape to paradise."

"I shall treasure that promise," replied Geraldine; "but I think your society would rather assist in keeping up than in dispelling such an illusion."

"No, no, my dear, I am not to be flattered by that pretty speech. I know something of myself, difficult as that science is usually deemed; and, I found out, long ago, that I had at least 'a thousand and one' faults; but to know and to correct them, are distinct affairs. Love, perhaps, may do some-

thing for me; for I hope that these faults are not absolutely interwoven with the texture, but stand out like embroidery upon the surface. And now that I have edified you with that pretty simile, I will wish you good morning; for here comes Mr. Maitland, with a very lover-like step, as rapid as if we were shivering amidst the frosts of December, instead of panting beneath the fervour of a July sun. Listen, Geraldine,

> His very foot has music in't
> As it comes up the stair.

"Stay, pray stay," said Geraldine, endeavouring to detain her; "he will have so much pleasure in seeing you."

"Well! I will oblige you, certainly," replied Miss Cotterel, "if, in your turn, you will consent that I should whisper to him the subject of our conversation, and give him a true and particular account of the demolition of poor Mrs. Herbert's spectacle-case. I am sure it deserves to be recorded among the numberless mischiefs prompted or perpetrated by love."

Mr. Maitland now entered the room, and Miss Cotterel nodding her adieus took leave. He appeared too much pre-occupied to testify any very keen regret at the abrupt departure of this lively lady. He had just returned from the quiet rectory, to which she had alluded. The arrangements there were complete; the projected improvements accomplished; all within was comfort; all around beauty; and with a rapid and animated hand, he sketched a descriptive picture for Geraldine. The sloping meadows, extending before the house, refreshed by a few genial showers, were smooth and green as a velvet lawn; the wood that fenced it from the keen north-east was rich in leafy honours; the garden full of blooming sweets; clustering roses courted the hand to pluck them, and Mr. Maitland ventured in gentle whispers to regret that they should waste their sweetness.

Geraldine listened with downcast, but

not unapproving looks; and after a few more of those persuasive whispers, which 'lovers love,' his regrets were exchanged for gratitude.

CHAP. XXXII.

"WHAT business can you have in London at this season, my dear young lady?" said Mr. Wentworth to Miss Cotterel, who had been passing a week at Wentworth Hall, and whose frank and easy manners had won his good graces. "I shall not hear of your leaving Hampshire for three months at least."

"Notwithstanding this flattering prohibition, my dear Sir," replied Miss Cotterel, "I must be on my road to London in three days; and the most cruel part of the story you have yet to learn; for I mean to carry off Helen in my train."

Mr. Wentworth requested an explanation.

"I suppose, Helen," said Miss Cotterel,

"that the moment is arrived in which we may be allowed to reveal the secret of our dignity elect. You are to know, then, Sir," continued she, addressing Mr. Wentworth, "that upon a certain day, in a certain month, about the time when you are recommencing your warfare upon the poor partridges and hares on your manor, we are to play the part of bride's maids to a certain young lady of your acquaintance; and as we wish, if possible, to look as handsome as the bride, it is quite essential that we should lose no time in choosing the most bewitching hats, and caps, that can be found. I am sorry to confess it; but they certainly are powerful auxiliaries to female beauty."

"So the wedding day is fixed?" said Mr. Wentworth.

"It is," replied Miss Cotterel; "and as Mr. Mowbray, declines being present at the ceremony, you may expect a communication not only from the bride's maid, but from the bride-groom *elect*; for from

your hands he hopes to receive his lady fair."

"There is no person to whom I would give her with more pleasure," returned Mr. Wentworth. "Maitland is a great favourite of mine. I cannot quite understand how he comes to be the man; but I dare say it is all right."

"It would be endless to trouble ourselves with the caprices of love and lovers," observed Miss Cotterel, "they have always been incomprehensible; but I think this affair rather less complicate, than these things usually are. A few words may explain it. The young lady yielded her heart and promised her hand to a gallant knight, whose vows were music to her ear. He talked of eternal love, and she believed him. He proved, however, to be one of that class, (I hope, for the honour of your sex, it is not a large one) who forget, that —

> 'It is good to be merry and wise;
> It is good to be honest and true;
> It is good to be off with the old love,
> Before we be on with the new.'

"He whispered vows to other ladies, and *they* believed him. What was to be done in this case? The lady felt as ladies do on such occasions: she revoked her promise, and endeavoured to recall her heart. It was some time before this was effected; but at length the little wanderer returned.

"In process of time, Love, who longed to entangle this heart once more in his nets, assumed another, but not a less captivating form. The lady, however, did not recognise her old friend with a new face — she mistook him for friendship. One day, to her infinite surprise, he threw off his disguise, and stood revealed as love. She wondered at the transformation; but love only smiled triumphantly. Now, I hope, my dear Sir, that you will agree with me in the opinion, that the lady stands exonerated."

"Yes, my dear," replied Mr. Wentworth, laughing and shaking her heartily by the hand; "I understand the affair

now, and it is all natural enough; and, pray, tell me," said he, still holding her hand, "how comes it to pass that love, who is so busy with other hearts, leaves yours out of the question."

"Oh! I am resolved to have nothing to do with him, till he has got rid of his wings," said Miss Cotterel. "Do you think that day will ever arrive?"

"Why, I can't answer for that, indeed, my dear," replied Mr. Wentworth; "but when he becomes acquainted with you, I think he will be apt to forget the use of them. Will not that satisfy you?"

At this moment Edmund entered the room, and Miss Cotterel, anxious that the discussion upon love and his wings should be suspended, turned towards Mrs. Wentworth and enquired into the progress of her work.

"No one ever plied a needle with so much perseverance and dexterity as yourself, my dear Madam," said she; "you

will soon have finished this beautiful flounce."

"I wish to get this pattern done to-night, my dear," said Mrs. Wentworth, without raising her eyes from her work, "because to-morrow will be Sunday."

Mrs. Wentworth generally breathed a sigh of resignation as she folded up her work on Saturday evening; and, if the secrets of her heart had been disclosed, it would have appeared that this rest from her labours was irksome rather than welcome; indeed, without diving quite so far, it was in some degree betrayed, to curious observers, by a certain restlessness in her movements, a frequent consultation of her watch, and a disposition to gape, with which she was afflicted on the return of that day; and certainly, if there was a moment in which she was peculiarly alive to the blessing of existence, it was that in which she seated herself in smiling silence by her work-table, on the second day of the week.

Edmund now approached this table to detach Miss Cotterel from the work she was so busily admiring, and to persuade her to take a turn in the park. He had heard of the London journey; and, by a most *fortunate coincidence*, was summoned to town precisely on the day on which they proposed travelling thither.

Circumstances equally *fortunate* enabled him to escort them on their return; and it was soon whispered in the fashionable circles that Miss Cotterel, after having had a duke, an earl, and sundry baronets at her feet, was about to bestow herself and her fortune on the son of a plain, old-fashioned country gentleman.

Report said that the marriage was not to take place till the ensuing spring, when it would be celebrated with a magnificence suitable to the splendid fortune of Miss Cotterel, and the hospitality according with the benevolent and *old-fashioned* feelings of Mr. Wentworth.

In the interim, the few simple preparations that were to precede a less splendid marriage went busily on. It was one in which pomp and pageantry were to bear no part, and they were speedily completed.

CHAP. XXXIII.

It was on a fine soft September morning, that the bells of Hartley rung out a joyous peal.

Nature smiled sweetly on the lovely bride, who stood in bashful beauty before the altar of the village-church. Her heart beat quickly, and tears glistened in her eyes; but sorrow had no part in those tears, nor regret in that emotion. Tender confidence and sweet anticipations blended with the solemnity of the moment. Love and gratitude, kindling into rapture, beamed on the countenance of him with whom she was exchanging the holy vow, which pledged them to love and suffer, to weep and to rejoice together: nor were the chastened hopes that filled their hearts, likely to wi-

ther as earthly hopes are wont to do; for they were not founded on false and visionary views; amidst their brightest dreams they remembered that 'the web of life, is of a mingled yarn.' They looked not then for unclouded felicity, even in that calm retirement, where love and tenderness, and all the smiling train of social pleasures, met in delightful union. Rich and pure as these enjoyments were, and gratefully as they were cherished; they still knew them to be mortal, and therefore fugitive.

> But in that world, to which their hopes look'd on,
> Time enters not, nor mutability;
> Beauty and goodness are unfading there.

THE END.

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